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OR,

The Young Patriot Sea-Ranger.

A Romance of the First American Navy.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "HUNTED MIDSHIPMAN," "THE
ROYAL MIDDY," "NEPTUNE NED,"
"OCEAN FIRELY," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE PIRATE AND THE ROYAL MIDDY.

"COME, lads! get those guns on board, for a sail is in the offing, and, if I mistake not, our old foe, the Royal Middy, commands her!"

The words were uttered in cheery, yet warning tones, and were addressed to a number of men in sailor garb, who were engaged in moving some heavy ship guns from the rocky shelf of an island to the deck of a handsome brig that lay alongside.

"BY HEAVEN!" CRIED THE ADMIRAL, "I SHALL OUTLAW HIM FOR THIS. DRAW UP PAPERS, SIR, OF OUTLAWRY AGAINST MARK MONTAGUE."

The sea was calm, a light four-knot breeze only was blowing, and the tide was running seaward, so that there was but little heaving of the vessel against the rock, while it was also well protected from chafing.

The island was a rugged, desolate one, a few acres in size, wild upon the sea side, and shelving toward the main.

Some distance within its outer edge lay a wrecked vessel, having been driven there in some fearful storm and at highest tide, and from the wreck the guns, for it had been an armed schooner, were being removed to the brig lashed to the rocks.

The wreck was an old one, and had been given up as a total loss, but he who uttered the words that open this story, found in her a treasure that was as gold to him, in her fine battery.

The speaker was a man with a strangely attractive face, for one who bore the name of Caspar the Corsair.

What his history was none knew, excepting in the past few years of his lawlessness.

Some time before a bold smuggler had appeared upon the coast, and he defied all efforts of the British cruisers—for I write of a time just prior to the breaking out of the Revolutionary War—to capture him.

Soon, from a fearless smuggler he took to piracy along the coast, though his vessel, a handsome schooner of ninety tons, was said to be unarmed.

Be that as it may, he had a crew who knew their master and served him well, and many were the coasting vessels overhauled and forced to pay toll, while no armed craft sent in chase of him could capture him.

A man of fine physique, a perfect swordsman, gentle to his crew, yet a tiger if aroused, he was both loved and feared.

His face was intelligent, handsome, and would be more readily taken for that of a clergyman than a pirate, while his voice was rich, powerful and would ring like a trumpet in giving a command in a moment of excitement.

Such was Caspar the Corsair, or "Captain Caspar, the Coast King," as he was often called.

But though he had held his power for several years, of late misfortune had seemed to dog his steps, and it was a mere boy that had turned the tide of his luck, so to speak.

Out of the Kennebec River there had sailed a small sloop, a packet and freight vessel, running to Boston, and touching at the ports of Portland and Portsmouth when need be.

Her commander was a youth in his teens, but who, young as he was, had made for himself a history.

His home was upon the shores of the Kennebec, where he dwelt with his parents and sister, with an old negro couple and their son as servants.

His father was looked upon as a mysterious man, and for some reason the name of Hermit Exile had been given him.

A distinguished looking man, he had been a captain in General Arnold's army on the march to Quebec, but when it was encamped on the Kennebec, he had met a brother officer in a duel, slain him, and, seriously wounded himself, had been left behind by his comrades.

With some means, he had, upon his recovery, erected a house on the river-bank below the town of Bath, and then departed, to return months after with his bride, a beautiful woman.

They held aloof from their neighbors, and dwelt there with the old negro couple referred to, and so black as to be christened by his parents Charcoal.

If the negroes could tell who and what Captain Henri Montague the Exile was, they never did so, and the cruisers were never able to find out whether he was English, American or French.

There, in that house two children were born, a daughter, Allene, and her brother Mark.

Captain Montague, in later years, became a seafarer, and was skipper of his own vessel, a schooner that he ran in the coasting and West Indian trade.

He had taken his little son with him on his voyages, and thus had laid the foundation for Mark's career that won him fame as he advanced toward manhood.

He had taught him his studies, made a skilled swordsman and shot of him, and thus Mark had grown up, to prove his prowess, when, his father laid up in his cabin from a broken leg, and the crew mutineering in a storm, he had quelled the mutineers, and, though the vessel was lost, had reached land in the life-boat, with Captain Montague, utterly helpless, and Charcoal.

The injury to Captain Montague resulted in

the amputation of his leg, and thus it was that Mark, a mere boy, purchased a pretty little pleasure sloop, the Sea-Cat, and turned her into a coasting packet, with half a dozen in crew, Charcoal, grown to man's estate, being his steward and cook.

It was in an attempt to capture the Sea-Cat that Caspar the Corsair, met his first serious repulse, for arming his passengers and crew Mark Montague beat off the pirates.

Soon after Mark saved a British cruiser from being lost, and an admiral being on board, it won for him a midshipman's berth in the king's navy, and thus gained for him the name of the Royal Middy.

In another attack upon the Sea-Cat, Caspar the Corsair lost his schooner, the Shark, the biter being bitten, and new laurels fell upon the brave young skipper.

But Caspar, each time, escaped, and at last had cut out the brig, which the reader has seen taking on board the guns from the wreck on the island, and put to sea in her, to flaunt his black flag fearlessly along the coast.

The brig had been captured in the Kennebec, and the same night, another lawless band had taken the Sea-Cat, Mark having given up the sloop to an old man to act as skipper, and still keep up the traffic for the benefit of those at home.

Mark Montague had, in the mean time, gone to Boston, to take command of Caspar's captured schooner, the Shark, which had been armed and manned by the naval authorities at Boston, and assigned, under its youthful commander, as a coast-guard vessel.

Upon the night that Caspar had cut out the brig from the Kennebec, accident had brought in his way Allene Montague, and he had at once kidnapped the sister of his bitter young foe, the Royal Middy.

Thus the reader can understand, when the sail was sighted in the offing, heading for the island, and believed to be his own schooner, the Shark, under the British flag, and the Royal Middy in command, that Captain Caspar, the Corsair, was most anxious to get his battery on board the brig, that he might defend himself and not again be overwhelmed with misfortune in the very hour of success.

CHAPTER II.

THE CORSAIR'S CAPTIVE.

THE brig, which lay alongside the rocky shelf of the island, was a very handsome craft.

About two hundred tons burden, she was as shapely as a cutter, and her rig was all that a true sailor could wish.

Her crew were a reckless-looking set of men, and they worked with a will to get the guns on board, for each one seemed to appreciate that he had a noose about his neck.

There was no easy task in getting the battery upon the deck of the brig, for the guns had to be dismounted from the carriages, and each taken on separately.

Then, to place them in position was not to be thought of until the whole battery was safe on the decks.

The wreck had also supplied small-arms and ammunition, and these had to be carried below decks and stowed away, so that the crew were kept working like beavers.

With a day more the brig could have sailed away from the island ready to fight an ordinary foe; but with that rakish-looking schooner in the offing, and standing down toward the island, hardly two hours' time was given them in which to prepare to defend their vessel.

Going up into the rigging, Captain Caspar took his glass and leveled it at the distant vessel.

After a long look he descended, and a voice at his side asked:

"Well, sir, is it your old vessel, as you supposed, under command of my brother?"

The speaker was a young girl, and she was clothed in a riding-habit and hat.

Her form was perfection, her every movement graceful, and her face one of exquisite beauty.

As she asked the question, her face and tone revealed an expression of triumph.

Caspar raised his hat with a courtesy natural to him, and replied:

"Yes, Miss Montague, that is my old schooner."

"And now about to turn her guns upon her old commander?"

"Doubtless."

"Without doubt, if my brother commands her."

"He must do so, for she was fitted out for him."

"He will not expect to find me on board, when he captures your brig, Captain Caspar."

"If he captures her," said the pirate with a smile.

"He will."

"You have faith in your brother?"

"Oh, yes."

"He is a remarkable person for his years."

"True, for he is younger than I am; but he seems to be a natural born sailor, and he is ambitious to rise."

"What course will he take in the war, which England and the Colonies are sure to have?"

"You will have an opportunity to ask him that question soon."

"Somehow I differ with you, for I will have a couple of guns mounted, at least, and can beat the schooner off."

Allene Montague shook her head.

"If you do beat the schooner off, what is to be done with me?"

The pirate was silent for a moment, and then he said in a low, earnest tone:

"Miss Montague?"

"Well, sir."

"I have told you that I was ashamed of having kidnapped you."

"But when you passed me on horseback that night, and I learned who you were, and returning, when your horse fell at my feet, stunning you, unconscious almost in my arms, I acted upon the impulse of the moment and carried you on board this brig, which I had boarded a short while before to cut out."

"It flashed through my brain that I could use you as a hostage; but when I saw you, in the light of the cabin, unconscious, innocent, helpless, my better nature came to my aid and I vowed I would set you free."

"And yet such a man is a pirate?" said Allene with sneer.

"Yes, and I am one from force of circumstances."

"But I told you that I would free you, and I will keep my faith with you."

"I could now, by sending out a boat under a white flag, keep yonder schooner at bay."

"How so?"

"I could state that I have you a captive on board, and threaten to kill you unless the schooner drew off."

"You would not do so?"

"Under no circumstances, but your brother does not know me, as—you do."

"I admit you have the power to protect yourself, by threats against me."

"But I am no coward, Miss Montague."

"Your worst foe has never accused you of that, sir."

"And I will not shield myself by getting behind a woman."

"It is certainly most kind of you to say so."

"I will try and do all I can to prepare my vessel for action, and if I lose, then I must bide the consequences."

"I fear your fate will be a bitter one."

"Yes, the yard-arm."

"My brother has orders to hang you without trial."

"So I learned; but do you notice that I always escape, Miss Montague?"

"Yes, you have done so three times of late, I believe, so there must be good enough in you for some saint to be your guardian angel."

"The devil is my patron saint," he said with a harsh, bitter laugh.

"Nay, say not so, for perhaps after all it may be a dead mother, or sister, who is your guardian angel," said Allene, feelingly.

She saw his face turn pale, and his lips quiver, while he said:

"Miss Montague, I am an utter outcast from the past, and all that is good in the present."

"But, let me say to you, that I shall fight yonder vessel to my best ability, and if I escape I will run into the Kennebec by night and land you at your home."

"If I am taken, then your brother will rescue you, and all is lost for me, and I have no hope."

"But I tell you now that I wish to leave in your hands a package, one I wish you to hold sacred for me until I am dead."

"Then open it, please, and act upon its contents."

"If I escape death, keep it for me until I ask for it."

"Will you do this for me?"

"I hardly know what to say, sir."

"One moment."

As he spoke he went down into the cabin, but immediately returned bearing a small, sealed package.

"Here it is, and I intrust it to your keeping; but I pray you, let no one know that you have it."

"Promise me this, and that living or dead, you will do as I ask of you?"

"I promise," and Allene seemed deeply moved.

"I thank you, Miss Montague.

"Now, I must hasten the work, and when we draw away from the island, to begin the fight, I beg of you to remain close in the cabin.

"Adieu, Miss Montague, and though it may seem a strange utterance from the lips of a pirate, I say from my heart, God bless you!"

CHAPTER III.

THE COMBAT.

FOR a long time after her strange conversation with Caspar the Corsair, Allene Montague stood by the cabin companionway, a look of anxiety upon her face.

When captured by the Corsair, she had been returning from a ride after the Boston stage, on which her brother had taken passage to the New England metropolis, on his way to take command of the Shark, to which he had been ordered.

His sloop, the little Sea-Cat, had sailed that afternoon, to be captured by outlaws in the river below, when Chips, a lad who was one of the crew, had escaped and brought the news.

Allene had mounted old Snowflake and gone in chase of the stage, riding alone through the forests.

She had overtaken it too, told her story, and, while her brother hastened on to his schooner-of-war, she had returned.

Chased by wolves she had become unnerved, and utterly worn out, old Snowflake, in passing along the road through the town which bordered the river, had stumbled and fallen, throwing his fair rider at the feet of Caspar the Corsair, who was standing there, while his men had just quietly taken possession of the brig.

When Allene recovered consciousness, she found herself in the cabin of the brig, and she was appalled when she knew whose captive she was.

But the soft-toned voice of the pirate reassured her, and somehow she had faith in his promises, and became less alarmed at her situation.

Leaving the Kennebec, the Corsair had run to the island and landed some of his crew, to get the guns off the wreck and on the rock, from whence he could transfer them to the schooner.

Then he had sailed for Boston, boldly entered the port as a merchant vessel, rescued his crew who were held as prisoners in the town, having been captured by the Royal Middy, and then returned to the island for his battery.

He had begun work early, in getting the guns on board; but early in the afternoon the schooner had hove in sight, and she had evidently sighted the brig lying behind the island, for she was heading in under all sail, as fast as the light breeze would bring her.

At last the battery was all on the deck, but an inextricable confusion existed, for not a gun was mounted.

The deck was littered from fore-castle to quarter-deck, and presented a most dangerous spectacle for a vessel on the eve of battle.

Allene Montague stood aft, gazing upon all and wondering what would happen.

She heard the order given to cast off from the island, and to put the brig under easy working sail.

Then every man was called to work, and a bow gun, and one of the starboard battery were mounted, the brig having been already pierced with port-holes.

Order came rapidly out of chaos, under the calm, able management of the brave young pirate captain, for he was under thirty, and the men felt confidence in their commander, though they felt that they would have to fight with three-fourths of their guns lying useless upon the decks.

The schooner meanwhile came straight on, the brig standing to meet her rather than to avoid the combat.

A beautiful craft the Shark certainly was, though one-half smaller than the brig.

She looked as neat and trim as a king's yacht, her sails were new, and she spread large canvas for a vessel of her tonnage.

"Your brother is a thorough sailor, Miss Montague, for he has done with the schooner just what I meant to do," said the pirate, gazing on his former little vessel with evident admiration.

"And what is that, sir?"

"He has added to her sail area, by increasing the size of her spars and topmasts, so that she will sail a third faster than when I had her, and be as stanch, too.

"He has a neat battery, too, upon her decks, I noticed when aloft just now, though rather a heavy one for her tonnage; but then he intends her for fighting, and not as a toy.

"Will you not go below now Miss Montague, for I shall open fire soon?"

"I will wait until the first shots are exchanged."

"They may be as dangerous as any other."

"Still, I will risk them, sir."

He bowed, and, walking forward, she soon after heard his voice ring out with:

"Ready there with that bow gun!"

"Fire!"

The discharge caused the brig to quiver, and the gun, unfortunately for the pirates, having been hastily mounted, dismounted itself by the fire.

The face of the pirate never changed a muscle at this mishap, and he coolly ordered the helmsman to luff, so as to fire the other bow gun.

This shot flew wild, as the brig was yawing at the time, and the crew of the outlaw vessel began to look anxious.

To the surprise of all, however, the schooner did not return the fire.

She came along at an easy pace, taking in her canvas, for working sails alone, and with her men at their guns.

But not a flash came from her bows.

The pirate saw at once that the intention of the schooner's commander was to board the brig and thus carry her.

He found his guns next to useless, and as his foe advanced called his men to repel boarders.

He was surprised at the action of the Royal Middy in this, as it would give the pirate an equal chance at close quarters, their crew being even larger than the schooner's, while those on the little cruiser must already have discovered the weakness of the brig's guns.

"Can he know that his sister is my captive?"

"No, impossible! for how could he have found it out?" muttered the pirate captain, and all seemed to take heart at the chance of a conflict with small-arms.

A few moments more and the schooner, most skillfully handled, was brought alongside the brig, a terrible volley of musketry was poured upon the pirates, grapnels were thrown, and then came the cry from the Royal Middy:

"Sharks, follow me!"

The speaker was the next instant upon the deck of the brig, his men at his back, and the irresistible onslaught drove the outlaws back, their daring leader fell to the deck, cries for quarter arose, and the brig was most gallantly won after a sharp, short action of a few minutes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOUNDED OUTLAW.

THE brig, which bore the name of the Dare-Devil, had been cut out, as I have said, from her anchorage in the Kennebec, having been built by a wealthy ship-owner of the town, with a view of making a privateer of her, in case of war between the king and the Colonies.

She had been retaken by Mark Montague in perfect condition, and with a very fair battery of guns on board.

The moment the crew of the brig had seen their captain fall, and the volley of small-arms from the schooner doing great damage to life and limb, they had become demoralized and had quickly cried for quarter.

Leaving his first officer to look after the prize and the prisoners, the youthful commander of the schooner had at once entered the brig's cabin, and his sister was clasped in his arms.

He was a tall, well-formed youth, with broad shoulders and a heavy chest that denoted strength.

His face seemed older than his years, for it was stamped with daring and resolution, and there was little of the boy in his bearing and manner of speaking.

He might readily be taken for a young man of twenty-one, both from his calm dignity, quick, decided manner and his bold, intelligent face.

Dressed in the uniform of a midshipman of those days, it fitted him well, and his sword had the appearance of being carried for use and not show.

"My dear sister, how happy am I in being able to free you from the power of that wretch," he said as he embraced her.

"But, Mark, is it not a great surprise to you to find me the captive of Caspar the Corsair?"

"No, for I met my father in a schooner, with a volunteer crew, looking for you, and he told me all."

"Brave, noble father! But, where is he, Mark?"

"I insisted upon his returning, telling him

that I would find Caspar and bring you back. But, sis, the Sea-Cat is gone!"

"Yes, she was captured the night that I was, for have you forgotten that I rode after the stage to give you the information?"

"Oh no; I can never forget that the Sea-Cat is lost."

"What has happened to her, Mark?"

"Well, when father came out of the river, in chase of the brig, for he got a crew hastily together and pursued, he discovered a sail a long ways off and headed for it. It proved to be my little sloop, with the crew on board that had captured her.

"They were not Caspar's men, it seems, but a gang who took her for what they would find on board, and for their own use.

"Old Buntline, Charcoal and the others of the crew were below, prisoners, but were soon released, and Merton Stanwood, who was acting as father's mate, went on board and took command.

"The prisoners he put in irons and confined below; but a storm came on, the sloop sprung a leak, the hatches could not be opened, and Stanwood and the crew had barely time to spring into the life-boat and pull away, when she went down."

"With those poor men in her hold?"

"Yes, and Stanwood was so overcome by their wild cries that he was white as a corpse when the schooner lay to and took him on board, father says."

"Poor wretches," and Allene shuddered.

"Yes, it was a horrible fate, sis; but come, tell me how Caspar treated you."

"With the utmost respect, and he meant to return me to my home."

"So he said, doubtless."

"No, Mark, he is a different man from what I supposed him, and he would have kept his word."

"Why did he kidnap you?"

"He picked me up when Snowflake fell and threw me heavily, so that I was stunned, and he carried me on board the brig, thinking of revenge against you.

"But he soon came and told me that he was sorry for his act, and would run into the river and send me home, as soon as he armed the brig so that he could defend himself."

"Well, I hope he would have done so; but somehow I doubt his word, though he is a strange man."

"And he is your prisoner now?"

"Yes, but will not be long."

"Ah! you mean to hang him?" asked Allene quickly.

"No, for he is mortally wounded, I think."

"Indeed! but can nothing be done for him, Mark? for somehow I pity that man."

"The schooner's surgeon took charge of him, and he will do all in his power; but it would be better for Caspar were he to die."

"I understand your meaning, brother."

"He was supposed to be dying from a wound when I captured him once before, you remember; but was playing 'possum and escaped as soon as we reached the dock."

"But this time he is really badly wounded?"

"Yes, he has a bullet-wound in his side, and the chances are against his getting well."

"Poor fellow! I almost hope that he will die."

"But will you go into the river now, Mark?"

"Yes, and carry the brig, which you can remain on, Allene, and I will also stay on board, or you can accompany me on the schooner."

"It will be but for a short while, so I will remain here."

"Will you mind Caspar's being brought to his state-room, for the others I will send on the brig?"

"Oh, no, and as he was kind to me, so will I do all that I can for him."

Mark now went on deck and saw the surgeon of the schooner.

"Well, what about Caspar, Mr. Lane?" he asked.

"I think, sir, he has received his death-wound, thereby cheating the gallows."

"There is no doubt this time?"

"None, Mr. Montague, for the bullet entered his side and passed close to his heart."

"The chances of his recovery are very few, sir."

"Very well; move him into the brig's cabin and do all you can for him."

A few minutes after Allene beheld them bring the wounded Corsair into the cabin.

He was conscious, and his eyes sought hers at once.

They made him as comfortable as possible, and then departed, to look after others who needed their aid.

He beckoned to her to approach, and said in a low tone:

"They say I will die."

"I have been told your wound was mortal."

"It is better so than to hang."

"Yes, far better."

"If I tell you a secret you will keep it?"

"Yes," she faintly replied.

"I shall not die now—I shall live to be hanged hereafter," came the startling words of the wounded pirate.

CHAPTER V.

THE MIDSHIPMAN'S TRIUMPH.

THE cold manner of the Exile toward all with whom he came in contact, and the fact that no one was a welcome visitor at his house had made him disliked by many who knew him.

He had shunned society, and his wife did likewise, while his children, as they grew up, held aloof from those of their age.

Ever polite to those with whom they came in contact, they still did not encourage friendship with any one.

Mark was admired as a dashing young sailor, and yet his very success, his going above the heads of those who were called "his betters," caused a feeling of envy against him.

The beauty of Allene had won for her many admirers, and yet she had no lover, if I except one person.

That one was a fast young profligate, Merton Stanwood by name, and a fine-looking fellow, once a midshipman in the king's navy, but dismissed "for cause."

His father, Judge Merton Stanwood, was immensely rich, for those days, and had but two children—his wild, reckless son, and a daughter, a beautiful girl, just merging into her teens at the time this story opens.

Merton Stanwood had cost his father and sister many a heartache, but they loved him devotedly, and tried to redeem him from the fast crowd who were his associates.

He had saved Allene Montague from drowning on one occasion, at the risk of his own life, and since then he had loved her as devotedly as he had hated her brother Mark.

The latter had on several occasions punished the insolence of Merton Stanwood, for Mark was a perfect young giant in strength, and this had, with envy, caused him to be hated most cordially.

Among the fast companions of Stanwood were two others who will figure in this story, as they did in the earlier career of Mark Montague.

One was Walter Patterson, the son of the rich merchant who was the owner of the brig Dare-Devil, and he had been a mate upon one of his father's vessels.

The other was Vincent Ream, a youth whose dissipated career was rapidly breaking his poor old mother's heart.

On one occasion, when a passenger on Mark's sloop, Mr. Patterson had made himself so obnoxious to the young skipper for doing his duty, that he placed him in irons, and this indignity Walter sought to avenge for his father's sake by picking a quarrel with Mark Montague.

At the same time Merton Stanwood also sought a quarrel with him, but his sister, Lola, passing at the time, quickly took the part of the young skipper, ending the affair there, though it terminated in a double duel afterward.

Mark was rescued by his father, to the chagrin and fear of his foes, for all seemed to be afraid of Captain Montague; but he gave to each of his enemies their lives at the point of his sword, a circumstance which but added to their hatred of him, for proving their master.

When Allene was captured the three young men, Stanwood, Patterson and Ream, had been among the volunteers to accompany Captain Montague in pursuit of the pirate, and the reader will remember that Merton Stanwood was in charge of the sloop Sea-Cat, when she sunk with her prisoners below decks and ironed.

So matters stood at the time that the Shark ran into the Kennebec, accompanied by her prize, the brig.

The whole town turned out to congratulate the midshipman commander upon his victory, and many were sincere in their praise of Mark, though his continued triumphs rankled in the hearts of many.

Upon coming in sight of his home Mark had signaled that his sister was on board, and old Abram, the man of all work, had sprung into a skiff and gone out to fetch her ashore, for, with but one leg, and a large man, Captain Montague could not get about very readily.

As the brig luffed up to let the skiff come

alongside, Allene said to her brother, who stood by her side:

"Mark, Surgeon Lane thinks that the pirate captain had better be taken on shore and to the town jail."

"The old jailer in charge will not neglect him, and he can have the attention of Doctor Craddock; so I wish you would leave him there and not carry him on to Boston."

"Well, sister, for his kindness to you I will do so, for I can truthfully report him as in a dying condition, and he will doubtless live but a few days."

"Now get into the skiff, and tell mother and father I will be home to supper, and will be hungry, too."

"You are still a boy about home meals, Mark, man though you be in all else," said Allene, with a laugh, and she was aided into the skiff, where Abram greeted her warmly, remarking:

"It will nigh break your mudder's heart wid joy, Missy Allene, to see yer back home ag'in, for it's been awful dismal since you was taken by dat old pirit."

So Allene rowed ashore, to be welcomed by her rejoicing parents, while Mark sailed on up to the town with his prize and prisoners.

It made his heart throb with joy at his triumph, as old Merchant Patterson came up and grasped his hand, while he said:

"I forgive you, my lad, for your act toward me, and I guess I was a little wrong, as you had to maintain order."

"I forgive you, and my brig, which you have brought back, I will arm some day, when the war breaks out, and you shall be her captain; for I don't believe, as folks say, that you will serve the king against your native land."

"Now, will you, Master Mark?"

"I am a king's officer now, Mr. Patterson, and I will do my duty as such; but let me thank you for your confidence in me, as far as offering me the brig."

"As the brig was captured from you, I cannot consider her as a prize, so will return her to you, and ask storage for the battery now upon her, which, of course, belongs to the king."

"Of course, my lad; and you can have the use of my warehouse below the town, the old brick one, for it is not in use now."

"But what about the prisoners?"

"The pirate captain is, I believe, mortally wounded, and he, with the others who are seriously wounded, I will place in jail here, while the others can be held at the fort until my return, for I am going on a short cruise to-night."

"What, so soon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anything up?"

"I wish to make a run along the coast, and see, sir, if there is anything to fall in with."

Mark then gave the order to have the chief and four of his men, who were the most seriously wounded, removed to the town jail, and litters were secured for them.

But hardly had they landed, when the crowd became threatening, and loud rung the cries:

"Swing them up!"

"Let them not cheat the gallows by dying with wounds, like honest seamen!"

"Up with them, lads, for they deserve hanging!"

Mark had remained on board ship, to attend to some duties before going home, and sent a young midshipman with the wounded prisoners, little dreaming of danger to them.

But the cries reached his ears, and springing into a boat alongside, he sternly ordered the oarsman to pull for the shore with all haste.

CHAPTER VI

PROTECTED.

THE young middy who had charge of the litters, bearing the wounded pirate prisoners to the town jail, was startled at the sudden and unexpected demonstration of the large crowd gathered upon the shore.

He knew that his commander, Mark Montague, had already been ashore and arranged with the jailer regarding the prisoners, and he was amazed at the hostile demonstration against them.

They had allowed him to go a short distance from his boats, thus cutting off retreat in that direction, and the crowd so surrounded him as to bar his way entirely.

"Stand aside, men, and let me pass!" he ordered in a fearless tone, for the young fellow had pluck, and meant to do his duty.

Then, too, he wished to emulate his commander, for Mark Montague had shown just what a midshipman could do.

There were some evil spirits in that crowd, and they were urging others on.

There were seamen from the world over, and a number of them were heated with drink, and thus rendered reckless.

They knew that Caspar the Corsair lay there at their mercy, and the eyes of the wounded pirate fearlessly met their own.

An honest soldier and sailor could die from wounds, and must these outlaws be allowed to do so?"

They were sorely wounded, it was true, yet, why not hang them and at once end their misery, and also let them die the ignominious death they deserved?

Such were their arguments and the crowd surged around the litters, only waiting for some bold spirit to lead them.

The Corsair chief did not flinch, and a defiant smile was upon his face, but his wounded comrades seemed to shrink from the angry men about them.

At the words of the young middy, Norris Gardiner, the crowd laughed rudely, while one said:

"We don't scare much, young officer, for such as you."

"Stand back, I say, and let me pass on with these wounded prisoners," ordered Norris Gardiner, sternly.

"We'll hang 'em fer you. Come, mates, up with 'em!" cried the man who had a moment before spoken.

He was a ruffian, for it was stamped upon his face, and one who had the strength and will to be dangerous.

The crowd seemed to feel that in him they had a leader, and one voice shouted:

"You lead, Jack Downy, and we'll follow!"

Instantly the reckless seaman sprung forward and grasped Caspar the Corsair by the shoulders:

"Release that man, sir!"

The voice was not that of the middy, Norris Gardiner.

It had a deeper, sterner tone, and a number cried:

"It's Montague, the middy!"

The man, Jack Downy, let go of the pirate chief, and turned upon Mark.

"We is going to hang them, cap'n."

"You will do no such thing, for I shall not allow it."

"Does you know who you is talking to?"

"Yes, an infamous bully," came the quick reply.

"You is talking to Jack Downy, who is known as ther King o' ther Forecastle, and he has a hundred men at his back to do as he tells 'em."

A silence fell upon all, and every eye was now upon Mark Montague. Would he shrink against such odds?

His reply gave answer:

"If you had two hundred men to back you, I would do my duty."

"What is yer duty?"

"To protect these prisoners."

"You can't do it, young mate," and the man laid his hand again upon the arm of the pirate captain.

"Release that man, or you shall regret it!"

The man laughed rudely and gave the pirate a pull that nearly dragged him from the litter.

Quick as a flash there came a circle of light, and the bright cutlass of the middy fell upon the hand of the King of the Forecastle severing it at a blow.

A cry of horror arose from a hundred lips and the crowd shrunk back, while, uttering a wild shriek of anguish Jack Downy grasped his handless arm and pressed it hard against his broad breast.

"Stand aside, all! You who lured that man on to his punishment, look after his wound!" cried Mark, in a voice that reached every ear.

Then he ordered the men to pick up the litters and move on once more, and the crowd shrunk back to give them way.

"Tear him to pieces men!" yelled Jack Downy in a frenzy of rage and agony, and a few of his mates made a move as though to obey.

But, the crowd was by no means composed of an element all bad, and many at once closed in around Mark and the prisoners to protect them, while, at a double quick there came from the shore a score of armed seamen, commanded by a young officer who had led them to the rescue from the Shark.

A cheer went up now, for Mark Montague and he moved on to the jail, no longer molested, and the prisoners were soon safe inside.

"You saved me from the rope-end, Midshipman Montague, and I thank you. You wield a

blade wonderfully well," said Caspar the Corsair in a low, faint voice, addressing Mark.

"It was my duty to protect you," was the cold response, and Mark moved away with his men.

As they reached the scene of the disturbance on their way up, Mark saw Doctor Craddock, whom he knew as one of the town physicians, coming out of a crowd.

"Your blow was fatal, Master Mark, for the man died ere I could check the bleeding. I congratulate you upon your success as a king's officer," said the doctor, in his blunt way.

"Thank you, sir; but I am sorry to have caused the man's death."

"You did right, all say, excepting a few; but, good-fortune to you, Master Montague!" and the doctor passed on, while Mark, after sending his men on board the schooner, started on foot for his home—Charcoal, his faithful comrade as well as servant, accompanying him.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE OF A KIND.

At the time of which I write there was a tavern in the town on the Kennebec, near where dwelt Mark Montague, known as the Sailors' Delight.

The fare was excellent, the rooms were comfortable, beds of the best, and only those who were aft of amidships on a vessel could stop there, for the prices of the Sailors' Delight were high.

Its tap-room was the resort, however, of different strata of society, and there could be seen the captain and the fore-castle hand drinking together.

It was said that the landlord always had "pet bottles for pet folk," but be that as it may, all seemed satisfied.

He had his tap-room, his quiet little parlor for any one who wished to be "private," and then there was a room for sports who wished to have a little game together, and at the same time save their reputations.

In a room that the latter might apply to, on the evening following the arrival of the Shark and the brig, were three persons.

The door was closed, each of the trio had his pipe, and upon the table about which they sat were three bottles of "the best."

One of these was Merton Stanwood, and one seeing him for the first time would like him.

He had a brusque manner, a flashing eye, and a fine form.

He was feared by those who knew him well as a bad man to arouse, and he was considered one who would be a deadly foe and quick with knife or pistol.

One of his comrades was Walter Patterson, the son of the merchant, who had offered his hand to Mark Montague, as his brig had been returned to him by the young midshipman.

The third person was Vincent Ream. His face was reckless to desperation.

He had begun well in life, taking a downward track and was keeping it.

He had almost beggared a loving mother, and her heart ached for her wayward boy.

In fact Vincent Ream was a desperate lad.

"Well, Mert, you had some motive in calling us up here," said Vincent Ream, after the three had been for some moments smoking their pipes and sipping their wine in silence.

"I have a motive in all that I do, Vincent," was the quiet response.

"I see; but out with your motive on this occasion."

"Well, he did for us."

"The middy?"

"Yes."

"Badly?"

"He goes up, while we go down."

"His luck can't always last," growled Walter Patterson.

"It sticks well," remarked Vincent Ream.

"I had a little luck," dryly said Merton Stanwood.

"You."

"Out with it."

"An, you are in it too."

"Name it!"

"How much?"

"You save your necks."

Both turned pale at this.

"I repeat it, you kept your necks out of the hangman's noose by my luck."

"Say, Mert, don't keep us in suspense."

"Out with it, Mert."

"Well, after our duel, we agreed to capture Mark Montague's sloop, didn't we?"

"Yes."

"He was to be killed."

"Yes."

"You got one man, Vincent, Walter got another, and I got a third, while Buck Johnson got a fourth, and they were to select three men each for the work."

"Go on."

"Correct me if I err."

"I will."

"So will I."

"Well, they were to board the sloop, kill Montague, and sell the cargo add craft to pay themselves."

"Yes."

"But Montague's luck saved him, for he didn't go in the sloop."

"He went by stage."

"Yes, and the men carried out their plan, got the Sea-Cat and put to sea."

"And were caught."

"That was the fault of circumstances, Vincent."

"How?"

"Well, that same night Caspar the Corsair cut out the brig and kidnapped Allene Montague."

"Her father got the schooner, we volunteered with others, and we went in chase."

"We sighted the sloop, pursued, and, in the heavy sea caught her."

"I went on board as commander."

"I heard you ask Captain Montague," said Walter Patterson.

"Lucky I did."

"Why?"

"I knew that those prisoners would talk."

"Ah!"

"I see!"

"They told me flatly, or my man did, that we were to let them escape, and give them money, or they would reveal the whole plot."

"My God!"

"That would have swung us."

"Yes."

"What did you do?" cried Walter Patterson.

"Yes, tell us, though the men are gone," said Vincent Ream.

"I just told him I would arrange it, and I did."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"The sloop sunk, didn't it?"

The men looked at him aghast.

"I knew that it was their lives, or ours and so I took an auger and bored holes in the hull, screwed the hatch down, and you know the result."

"The sloop began to settle, she labored fearfully, the prisoners shrieked wildly, and I took the crew in the life-boat and escaped."

"Good God! It was your act?" cried Walter Patterson, white at the thought.

"You then sunk the sloop with the prisoners in the hold?" said Vincent Ream in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, to save our necks from the hangman's noose," was the cool reply.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TRIO OF PLOTTERS.

THE cool manner in which Merton Stanwood had told his story of crime, appalled his hearers, evil though they were.

They knew that what he said was true, as to the testimony of the men who had run off with the sloop being sufficient to ruin them, and yet they could hardly believe that Merton Stanwood had struck a blow so fearful.

Still, the sloop had gone down at sea, and the prisoners who had seized her had been in irons below decks, and she had proven their coffins.

The sweat came out upon their foreheads in great beads, and they gazed in amazement at Merton Stanwood who calmly met their gaze, puffing away at his pipe the while, and sipping his wine.

"I could never sleep a wink, had I done that deed, Stanwood," said Walter.

"Nor I," added Vincent.

"Where is the difference between one man and a dozen?"

"They would have been tried for piracy and hanged."

"I caused them what is supposed to be an easier death, and cut them off a little sooner only."

"I tell you, it was those men or ourselves, and I preferred that they should suffer, and I am surprised at this chicken-like sentimentality."

"I'll not say more than to thank you, Mert."

"And I too, only I'd rather have the dead on your conscience than mine," said Walter.

"Well, what are we to do now?"

"About what?"

"The boy."

"Mark?"

"Who else?"

"Yes, he still lives and thrives."

"And will, if we don't end him."

"What now?"

"We are just where we started."

"True."

"The old man has forgiven him," said Walter.

"Yes, and many more are going over to his side, now that they see he has a vessel."

"It is but a small schooner."

"Of nine guns."

"It makes no difference, he has the vessel."

"About half a hundred men."

"And not an officer above a middy in rank."

"Now, mates, be reasonable, for the lad does command a schooner-of-war, with sixty men, nine guns, and if his officers are all middies, it is because he is but a midshipman himself."

"You know he cannot have in his command an officer of higher rank than himself, and the British are afraid of American officers in their service anyhow."

"The lad has done well, better than we have, better than men twice his years, and he has Caspar a prisoner now, if not dying, as I believe he is."

"This will be remembered, and just now, in these threatening times, Mark Montague, as an American, will be promoted."

"But is he an American?"

"Yes, he was born where he lives."

"Will he serve the king or the Colonies in a struggle?"

"That I don't know, but they will take precious good care to keep him as a king's officer if they can."

"I believe he will so remain."

"If he don't they will brand him as a pirate."

"Now that is all in the future, and what we wish to decide is the present."

"True, so what would you say, Stanwood?"

"I would say that we must get rid of Mark Montague."

"But how?"

"That is the question that we must decide."

"He goes to sea to-night."

"Yes, but will soon return."

"The people are going over to him strongly."

"Yes, his bold act in protecting Caspar from the mob helped him."

"It was a daring deed."

"True, and all of our urging the crowd on only got Jack Downy killed."

"He was a man I felt sure could have mastered the middy," said Walter.

"Yes, so I thought; but Mark Montague is not to be trifled with."

"Well, say what you want done, and I am in for it."

"I have to go slow, for the judge is in love with the boy, and my little sister Lola thinks he is just second to the king, and they cannot understand why I do not gush over him."

"Why, several sent, at my instigation, for the judge to come down and try Montague for killing Jack Downy."

"Well."

"Father came."

"And the result?"

"He said he was sorry the boy had not killed more of the mob, and he said to those who sent for him that he wished they had sense enough to know the difference between a murder and justifiable killing."

"So you see I have to be careful."

"I should think so, for your father hears the case, and your sister passes judgment upon it."

"It is about so."

"Where has he gone to-night?"

"On some cruise, and I am sure there is something in the wind."

"Doubtless."

"When does he return?"

"Within the week, I guess."

"How would it do to assassinate him?"

"Who would do it?"

"Hire some one."

"Not I, for it costs too much to silence an assassin, as I know by experience," was Merton Stanwood's grim and significant response, and his companions shuddered as they thought of the men on the sloop who had gone down in irons.

"We three should be able to do it."

"So I think," said Vincent.

"I have still another plan."

"Out with it, Merton."

"Let Caspar the Corsair do it."

"What?"

"I mean it."
 "I don't understand."
 "The pirate can do it."
 "He is dying."
 "So all believe."
 "Is he not?"
 "No."
 "You know this?"
 "Well, I'll guarantee, if you help me, he will not die; and more, he will get rid of Mark Montague, too."
 "I'll help."
 "So will I."
 "I'll need a little money."
 "Now you hit me."
 "And me; but it seems, Merton, you've been awful lush with gold of late."
 Merton Stanwood's face flushed at this, but he said:
 "Yes, the old gentleman has been very liberal."
 "I hear you don't owe a dollar now."
 "Yes, I paid every dollar."
 "So I have."
 "Credit must be good?"
 "It is; but the truth is, mates, I've reformed."
 Both laughed, and Stanwood continued:
 "Now you must reform too, and all will go well."
 "What's the use?"
 "To get cash."
 "I see."
 "My old man will fork over if I quit drink and gambling," said Walter Patterson.
 "My dear old mother has little to give, but I could get a hundred from her if I swore off," Vincent Ream said.
 "Well, we will all reform, and you raise a hundred, Vincent; you double that sum, Walter, for you can, and I'll give three hundred, which is more than fair."
 "You give me the money, and I'll see to it that Caspar goes to sea and carries Mark Montague with him, and that means the yard-arm for the middy, who is only waiting for the pirate to get well enough to hang him."
 "It's a bargain."
 "I'm in."
 "All right, now let us have a bottle apiece all round, and then reform from to-night—in public!"
 The wine was ordered, and the three plotters left the private room in the Sailors' Delight, more than ever bent upon destroying Mark Montague.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CORSAIR'S ALLY.

LUKE WEST, the jailer, was a good-hearted man, in fact strangely so for one who was accustomed to witness so much of human crime and misery.
 Somehow, from the moment that he got the pirate prisoners in his keeping he took a fancy to Caspar, the chief.
 The man was desperately wounded, the doctor said, and must die, so with the shadow of death upon him, Luke West felt a pity for the pirate, and forgave him for his sins.
 He placed him in a comfortable room, where only favored prisoners were allowed, and it had a fine view overlooking the river.
 His wife prepared for the chief the best dainties that she could, and Caspar seemed to realize that his sufferings were to be soothed all in the power of those about him to do.
 He had been several days in the jail, and was wont to ask daily if the Shark had returned, when one afternoon a visitor was announced.
 "Who is he?" eagerly asked Caspar.
 "His name is Merton Stanwood, sir, and he is the son of our judge here, who is a great man."
 "His father has sent him, he says, to get some statements from you," said the jailer's wife, for Luke West was absent just then.
 "Admit him, please," the wounded outlaw said, wearily.
 A moment after Merton Stanwood entered, and the pirate greeted him with a cold nod.
 Stanwood listened at the door until he was sure that Mrs. West had gone down-stairs about her duties, and then he said:
 "Well, after all I did for you, you got caught."
 "Yes; and you got ample pay for what you did, as the brig was not your own."
 "True; but if I had not told you about her, you would have had no vessel."
 "I would have cut out some craft, yet not so good a one, perhaps."
 "But what are you here for?"
 "Are you as seriously wounded as it is said?"

"The bullet has not been extracted."
 "Plague the bullet, and tell me if you will be able to be up soon?"
 "Yes."
 "And of course you will again turn pirate?"
 "Once a pirate always one."
 "I see; and you will wish a vessel?"
 "Yes."
 "And crew?"
 "Of course."
 "I can arrange it for you."
 "How?"
 "I can get you a vessel and a crew."
 "Well?"
 "Upon conditions."
 "Of course."
 "We have been friends, now—"
 "Don't desecrate friendship by calling by that name the tie existing between us!"
 "As you please, Captain Caspar," and Stanwood's face flushed.
 "You are the son of a prominent man and an honest one, and I am a pirate."
 "But I am open in what I do, while you, my ally, wear a cloak of honesty."
 "For reasons of your own, to gain certain ends, you came to me, and we entered into a compact."
 "Now, what you have done for me I have paid you for, and am willing to do so again."
 "But, don't call our sinful alliance friendship."
 "As you please; but are you willing to agree to my terms?"
 "What are they?"
 "I will go to Boston and secure for you a crew, and the men can come here in a trader."
 "The brig lies at anchor below the city, having still on board the guns and munitions of war that she had, as Merchant Patterson, her owner, is anxious to buy the battery from the Government, if, after he has seen Mark Montague, he will sell it to him."
 "What does the merchant want with an armed craft?"
 "Well, he seems to feel sure that war must come within a short while, and he is anxious to have a privateer ready to at once send out against British shipping."
 "He is right, both about war soon coming and his intention to send a privateer to sea."
 "So, instead of landing the battery and arms at the warehouse, as was agreed, he still keeps all on board the brig, and is having her fitted up in fine style, the guns mounted and all made ready."
 "Well?"
 "Now I can get a crew, as I said, and have them come into port below decks on some coaster, as soon as you are able to take command."
 "You can escape readily, if you keep up your idea about being so seriously wounded, the brig can be seized, and you can put to sea on an armed vessel."
 "It is the very plan."
 "But I said there were conditions."
 "As a matter of course, for you are a man to act only on conditions."
 "I will want money."
 "Yes."
 "And also you are to carry out a certain plan for me."
 "Name it."
 "You are to capture Mark Montague, whom I will get into your power, take him out to sea and hang him, as he will you, as soon as he believes you well enough, unless you anticipate his intention toward you."
 "I see; but why do you hate this young man so heartily?"
 "He is in my way."
 "In what respect?"
 "Well, to be frank with you, he has gone over the heads of his betters, and I am sure at heart that he is a king-lover, and in case of war will be true to the Crown."
 "Then he hates me also, and does all in his power to keep his sister from caring for me."
 "Ah! you know her then?"
 "Yes, I saved her life."
 "Indeed?"
 "Yes, at the risk of my own."
 "It was noble of you."
 Merton Stanwood glanced quickly at the pirate, for he felt that he detected a sneer in the manner in which he said the words.
 "Well, I love the girl, and intend to marry her; but of course if she thought I plotted against her brother, I would stand no show."
 "Does she love you?"
 "I think so."
 "And you wish young Montague hanged?"
 "Yes, or gotten rid of, for once he is out of

the way some of the rest of us will stand a chance.

"Now it is all the Royal Middy, the splendid young sailor, and the town has gone mad over him, so that no one else is looked at."
 "I see."
 "Now how much money do you wish?"
 "I will need expenses of course, to go to Boston, and each man must have a bonus."
 "Then there will be the chartering of some old craft to bring them here in."
 "And this will take about three hundred pounds, for I will want a crew of fifty men, at least."
 "Yes, but three hundred pounds will do."
 "Now for yourself?"
 "I will want as much more."
 "So be it. I will give you jewels amounting in value to six hundred pounds, half now, and the other half the night I escape from here."
 "Agreed."
 "Now the sooner you get to work the better."
 "You will be able, think you?"
 "Yes."
 "And you are to take Mark Montague to sea with you?"
 "Yes, if you arrange for his capture."
 "Now go, but post me if all goes right, or wrong."
 "I will."
 So saying, Merton Stanwood left the prison, muttering to himself:
 "I make a good thing of this, for I get rid of Mark Montague, and get pay from Walter and Vincent for doing so, while the pirate also pays me well, as I shall get a crew through a man in Boston, that will cost precious little, and it is cheaper to seize a coaster than to charter one."
 "I'm in luck, surely, for I have reformed. I do not owe a dollar and have prospects ahead, only I must cover up my tracks so that no one will suspect me, and Allene must feel that I am Mark's friend," and the villain laughed at his own plot for deviltry.

CHAPTER X.

A RUDE SUITOR.

ALLENE MONTAGUE was very happy to be once again in the dear old home with her parents.
 It was of course a sad thing for the parents and sister to see Mark take his leave after supper and going on board his vessel put to sea.
 He was accompanied by the faithful negro, Charcoal, and Chips, a freckled-face lad of sixteen, bright as a gold-piece, too, was his cabin-boy, an honor which he seemed to fully appreciate.
 Mark had told his parents and sister where he was going, and as it was upon a mission of danger, they could not but feel anxious regarding him, and they saw the pretty schooner sail away with great regret.
 But then he was a sailor and must risk the dangers that faced him, and he had been so fortunate that they hoped for the best.
 After his departure, Allene told her parents all that had happened to her, from her riding away from home on Snowflake, to overtake Mark in the stage, to her capture by Caspar the pirate, and her captivity on his vessel.
 She spoke of him with pity, rather than bitterness, and added:
 "Father, that man has some strange history that has driven him to piracy, and he is a gentleman at least in address and feelings."
 "I should hate to see him hanged."
 "So would I, after his treatment of you, my child," remarked her father.
 The more she thought over the matter, the more she regretted that Caspar must perish upon the gallows, and the result was a decision in her mind to do all she could to prevent it.
 Several days after, Allene was seated at her favorite retreat, a high rock that commanded a view of the river and picturesque scenery on all sides.
 It was a huge boulder, sheltered in the rear by pines, and upon it old Abram had built a rustic arbor for his young mistress.
 A steep pathway led to it, and up this Allene was wont to climb every afternoon and read, sew or sketch, as the humor suited her.
 Back through the pines ran the highway leading down the river, and a hundred yards away. A path leading to the highway, and which was the way to town, passed not far from the retreat, and went on to the house, further down the hill.
 In a pine grove not many rods from the retreat, and upon a point that commanded a view of the river, was a grave, marked by a headstone.

The grave seemed well-cared for, was moss-covered, and about it were flowers planted.

Upon the headstone was the following inscription:

"IN MEMORY OF
SIR GORDON LANGDON,
Major of the Tenth Dragoons, H. B. Majesty's Army,
Serving in the American Colonies. Killed in
a duel on this spot,
SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1754.

This stone is placed here by a brother officer.

The story told on this gravestone was of the officer who had fallen in the duel with Captain Henri Montague.

But the words:

"This stone is placed here by a brother officer." did not tell that that "brother officer" was Henri Montague himself, who had built his home near the grave of the man he had slain, and placed to his memory a gravestone.

Of course, Mark and Allene, when children, had heard their father spoken of as an exile, and the story told of how he had killed a brother officer in a duel.

But they had never spoken to him upon the subject, for there was that in his manner that forbade it, and one day, when they had asked their mother what it all meant, she had uttered a few words that silenced them immediately, and more, prevented their ever speaking to her again about it.

With this grave in view, which held a strange mystery for her, as for all others, Allene sat in her retreat, her sketch scrap-book in hand.

Suddenly a shadow fell upon her work, and looking up she beheld Merton Stanwood by her side.

"Ah, Mr. Stanwood, why did you come here?" she cried.

"I knew that in yonder den of yours no visitors are allowed, no hospitality is shown, and I am debarred from seeing you; but the woods are free to men, as well as wild beasts, and being in a wooing humor I came here," was the rude reply.

"You know that I cannot receive your attentions, sir."

"Still I am here, so what can you do about it?"

"I can leave you here alone."

"Oh, no, you will not do that, you will stay and hear me tell you that I love you, Allene Montague, and intend you shall be my wife."

"You have told me so before, Mr. Stanwood, and yet you and I can never mate."

"Where would you be now, but for me?"

"Dead, at the bottom of the river."

"True, and that gives me a claim upon you."

"Upon my gratitude, oh, yes, and I thank you, though words are a cold return for a life."

"So say I, girl, and you must give me your love, your hand."

"Mark would rather see me die first."

The man very nearly uttered an oath, but checking himself said:

"Mark does not understand me."

"He deems me bad, and bad I was; but I have reformed, have cast aside my old associates, and intend to prove myself worthy of you, for marry you I will."

"My parents, as well as Mark, would never consent."

"And you?"

"Well, sir, I hardly know what to say, for I do not think I understand whether I feel love or gratitude for you."

"Marry me, and I will teach you to love me."

"I would not marry you without the consent of my parents and my brother."

A smothered oath escaped his lips, and then he said:

"Well, I shall win their consent, mark my words, for I am a changed man, Allene Montague."

"Now I go away for some week or two, on business for my father, and I wish you to watch my career and see if I do not make myself worthy of you."

"But, with or without the consent of your parents and your brother, marry me you shall."

"Good-by!"

Ere she could prevent he threw his arms about her waist and impressed a kiss upon her lips.

Then he was gone, leaving Allene's face flushed with mingled shame and anger at the daring act of the rude suitor for her love and hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FRENCH FOE.

WHEN his little sloop, the Sea Cat, had sailed on what afterward had proven her fatal and last voyage, Mark Montague had left in her.

It was his intention to go by her to Boston, and, upon arrival there, take command of the Shark, which would be ready for him.

As the Sea-Cat, however, had dropped down the river, a barge from the fort below was met coming up, and being hailed, the officer in charge had given the information that a French cruiser, in a crippled condition, had put into a secluded bay on the coast, to hide there and repair damages.

It was said that in an action with a British vessel her foremast had been shot away, and she had otherwise suffered severely, so had hunted a safe hiding-place in which to repair.

It was this news that caused Mark to desert the Sea-Cat, land at a point near by, and start across to catch the stage that he knew would soon be on its way for Portland.

His little sloop had gone on, to be captured by the hirelings of Merton Stanwood and his comrades, and the captor's had met the sad fate of death in irons in the hold of the doomed Sea-Cat.

Thus Mark had escaped, and Chips, escaping, had reported the news to Captain Montague, causing Allene to ride after the stage and inform her brother.

By stage Mark knew that he could reach Boston far sooner than by sloop, and he hoped to find a cruiser in Portland or Portsmouth, on his way, to send after the French vessel-of-war.

In this he was disappointed, and none being in Boston either, he went to sea in the little Shark, hoping to capture his sloop, which he supposed had been seized by Caspar, the Corsair, for he did not know that he had bitter foes near home working against him.

Meeting the Fleetwing, under command of his father, in pursuit of the brig which Caspar had taken, he went in chase of the latter vessel as he learned the fate of the Sea-Cat.

The captain of the Dare-Devil, and her captain and crew, the reader has interviewed, as also the fact that the Shark sailed almost immediately after, on some secret service.

Dropping down the river to the fort, Mark went ashore and called upon the commander of the fort, Major De Haven.

The major had retired but readily granted an interview, when he knew that his visitor was the famous Royal Middy.

"Well, Midshipman Montague, I am glad to see you, and I feel sure you are plotting some mischief to your foes, or you would not arouse an old soldier like me," said the officer, pleasantly.

"I came, Major De Haven, to say that the French cruiser that went into Hidden Bay to repair, cannot have gotten away yet, and I believe she can be captured."

"What with?"

"Well, sir, I have the Shark—"

"My dear fellow, the Frenchman mounts twenty-six guns, so the fisherman told me, and he ran her in, hoping to have her captured in there by some British vessel."

"I know, sir, but I am well acquainted with Hidden Bay, and with your aid believe we can capture the Frenchman."

"Explain your plan, Montague, and if not too daring, count on my aid."

"Well, sir, Hidden Bay is in the shape of a powder-horn, the small end being seaward."

"The two points are very high, and a vessel coming out must pass under those cliffs, and not a hundred yards from either, and the two points of land, or cliffs, are but two hundred yards apart, and the channel is winding."

"Once in the bay a vessel goes to the further end, but half a mile away, for a safe anchorage, and above her are cliffs two hundred feet in height."

"Now, sir, I could go by night, and put heavy guns upon these two points, and upon the cliff over the anchorage, and also station marines about to pick off the crew."

"When daylight comes, seeing the trap he is caught in, and with my little vessel in the channel, I believe the French captain will surrender without a shot."

"But if not, we can force him to do so."

"Montague, you are a born sailor, and soldier as well, and I will do all I can to aid you."

"Now, what guns and men do you wish?"

"I think a battery of six field-pieces will be enough, for the shots will be from a plunging fire upon the decks, and with the gunners for that number of pieces, and say fifty soldiers with muskets, we can present a force sufficient."

"I think so myself, and I will give the orders for the men to get ready at once; but I will

have to ask my officers as to going under your command, for you are a junior, you know."

"I am content to serve under any officer you may send, sir."

"Not that, when you are the one who plots the capture of the vessel."

"I will explain to my officers the situation, and there will be no trouble, for you will be in command of all, and they can have their forces of artillery and infantry under them, so there will be nothing to conflict, only you are to lead."

"Thank you, sir, and I will see to it that not an officer shall have cause for being offended."

Two hours after, with a field battery of six twelve-pounder guns, and eighty men from the fort on board, the Shark sailed out of the river just before dawn, and headed slowly down the coast, bound upon the daring undertaking planned by the Royal Middy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIDDY'S TRAP.

KNOWING the coast thoroughly as he did, Mark Montague reached the vicinity of the Hidden Bay an hour after nightfall, for he had so planned.

A boat was lowered, and accompanied by an infantry and artillery officer, Mark started out to reconnoiter.

He reached the entrance to the bay and discovered the lights on board the French vessel.

Thus being assured of her presence there still, he landed upon one of the points and showed the artillery officer that the guns could be dragged to the top of the cliff.

A landing upon the other point proved that guns could also be taken up there.

The boat then pulled for the schooner, and the boats were all lowered, for extra ones had been brought from the fort.

The four guns for the two cliffs were then sent to take position, while a couple more were landed at another point, and, with the infantry, began a march inland, to flank the head of the bay.

The men wore heavy woolen socks over their shoes, the wheels of the guns were all padded, every chain was wrapped tight, and not a sound was heard as the little force marched on shore.

A tramp of a couple of miles, and a hard one, for it was up a steep hill, and a halt was called.

Then Mark and two officers walked forward, and came out upon the cliff overlooking the bay.

There, not a hundred yards away, lay the French vessel at anchor.

Ashore was a camp of her crew, almost directly beneath them, and the fires were still smoldering.

On the vessel and in the camp not a sound was heard.

The Frenchmen were wholly unsuspecting of danger, for on that wild part of the coast there was no human habitation for many leagues, and each day a lookout was kept upon one of the cliffs on the point, to report an enemy coming from seaward.

Familiar with the land, as he had hunted there often, as well as the coast, Mark had expected a lookout would be kept upon the higher cliff, the one that gave the better view, and he had so piloted the schooner in her approach close along the coast, as to keep hidden from the eye of any one on the watch.

After dark there was no need, of course, of a watch, so the lookout had gotten into his skiff, and returned to the ship.

After gazing down upon the vessel and the camp for some time, and selecting stands for the guns, Mark and the soldiers returned to the force, and half an hour after all was in position, not a sound having disturbed the sleeping Frenchmen.

The infantry soldiers had stationed themselves about on the cliff, where, protected themselves, they could command the decks.

It was now nearly dawn, and in breathless silence all waited.

Mark had given orders for the schooner to tow into the entrance to the bay just before dawn, and lay broadside to, and one of the guns on the cliff on the right was to send a solid shot over the French vessel just at daylight, as a means of awakening the Frenchmen and showing them the trap they were in.

Upon the firing of this shot Mark was to hail the cruiser and demand its surrender.

If refused, the infantry were to pick off the crew to show their advantage, and if still the French captain did not surrender, the guns on the cliff were to open fire with plunging shots, and the Shark was to fire her broadside.

With no sound to break the silence other than

the wash of the waves upon the shore, the party awaited the coming of dawn.

Each man seemed to hear his own heart beat, and the darkness, solitude and silence were impressive.

Then the eastern skies grew gray, then brightened, and at last the light of dawn began to steal over the sea and shore, the darkness fading before it.

Still no sound came from the French vessel or the camp.

They had not yet been aroused by the call of the watch, summoning them to busy action.

Suddenly there came a red flash from the cliff, nearly half a mile away, the deep boom of a gun awakened a thousand echoes along the iron-bound coast, and two hundred startled Frenchmen were upon their feet, both ashore and afloat.

In dismay they stood an instant, while suddenly, as though from the clouds, and to add to their alarm, came the words in French, for Mark had learned the language well from his father:

"Ho! the cruiser! Surrender, or we will sink you!"

There were stern orders, quieting shouts of alarm, hurrying feet on shore and upon the vessel, and as the day brightened, the Frenchmen saw that they had been most cleverly caught in a trap.

But they were brave men, and must feel the force they surrendered to, and as the boats from ashore, filled with the men from the camp, put off, the French captain ordered his crew to quarters, though his vessel, undergoing repairs, and the decks littered with spars, sails and timber, and a new foremast just placed in position, was in no condition to fight a foe.

"Do you surrender, monsieur?" called out Mark, from the cliff.

"No, monsieur! I shall fight!" came back the response.

Then the order was given by the infantry officer for his men to fire, and two-score muskets rattled a leaden hail upon the decks.

A number fell, killed and wounded, and Mark said earnestly:

"This is but butchery, so we will show our force."

"Signal the cliffs and schooner to fire, and we will do the same."

The signal was given, and the guns from the cliffs and the broadside from the schooner sent a shower of iron upon the French cruiser.

Dismayed now, the French captain surrendered quickly, and the fight was won, for the bold ruse of the middy had been successful.

Ordering the French crew below decks, Mark descended with a few men, and boarding the vessel, made prisoners of the men, comprising those below decks, while the officers were given the freedom of their vessel.

The schooner now took the field-guns on board again, and the French vessel being repaired enough to set sail, the two craft put out of the Hidden Bay.

A short halt at the mouth of the river to launch the guns and troops and then the Shark held on her way with her big prize to Boston, and those who saw the two vessels running into the harbor, could hardly believe their eyes that the large French cruiser had been captured by the little British schooner.

But the news soon spread of the middy's trap set for the Frenchman, and Mark Montague won greater fame to gladden the hearts of his admirers and increase the hatred of his foes.

CHAPTER XIII.

STANWOOD PLAYING HIS BOLD GAME.

WHEN Mark Montague arrived in the port of Boston with his prize he had a long talk with the commodore in command of the naval forces of the Massachusetts Colony, and who had been his friend from the first.

"My dear Montague, you have won promotion several times by your daring deeds," said the commodore, "and yet I dare not promote you, as the veriest jealousy exists against you, and your years are too few to permit me to place you over older officers who are lieutenants."

"I know I am young, sir, but I am striving to force recognition of my services, though I may not for some time gain a higher rank."

"Yes, and you are doing so, and I only wish that I could advance you as you deserve."

"But the trouble is I was condemned for giving you the Shark to command, and there is a great feeling against you because you are an American."

"I am aware of that, sir! but I am proud of being an American!"

"No doubt, for you Yankees are a great

people. But it is hinted that you will side with the Colonies against the king, in the war that must come."

"No one has heard me express any intention, sir, as to what I shall do."

"But you will, of course, as a king's officer, remain in our service, should there be war?"

"I hope there will be no war, commodore," was the reply,

"Well, now to what you will do?"

"I shall cruise along the coast, sir, returning here to Portsmouth and Portland for orders, at certain times."

"That is right; but about the brig you captured with the pirate upon it?"

"She was the property of a Kennebec merchant, sir, so I left her there, while he is to have the battery stored, subject to your orders."

"That is well, my lad; but as to Caspar the pirate?"

"He is desperately wounded, sir, and I carried him to the town jail, as I stated in my report to you, along with four other seriously wounded pirates."

"The slightly wounded are with the unharmed prisoners, whom I left at the fort when I went on the expedition after the French cruiser."

"Well, put them on board a packet, keeping them in irons, of course, and send them here, along with their chief, if he can be moved, for an example must be made of these pirates, and it shall be one that outlaws shall remember."

"There is a trading schooner from the Kennebec now in port, sir, and I will tell him, if you wish, to bring the pirate prisoners back with him on his return, giving him an order for them to Major De Haven."

"Do so, Montague; they can come that way as well as not, while the crew can guard them easily, if they are heavily ironed and below decks."

After some further conversation, Mark bade the commodore adieu and went down to the wharf, alongside of which lay the Kennebec schooner he had referred to, taking on her cargo for the run home.

As he approached he did not observe a man step quickly behind some boxes of freight to avoid being seen by him.

The man was Merton Stanwood, who had arrived in Boston, and was looking about the wharves, to pick up a crew for the Corsair.

He was no longer dressed in his nobby style, but as a common seaman, and wore a tarpaulin pulled down over his eyes.

His black beard had been allowed to grow for more than a week, and few would have recognized, without a close look, this stylish young profligate in the seedy personage he then appeared.

After half an hour passed on board the schooner—for he had entered the cabin with the skipper—Mark came out, and getting into a harbor boat, was rowed out to his schooner.

"The boy is setting sail," muttered Stanwood, and an ejaculation of pleasure escaped his lips, as he saw the schooner head seaward.

"Now what can Mark Montague have wanted on that craft?" muttered Stanwood.

"I will find out, and I know how to do it, and if I am not mistaken he has sent the craft after those pirate prisoners."

"Ah! what a good thing for me if he has."

"Now I know Skipper Lewis pretty well, and I know his weaknesses too, and I'll try him well, for I can rig up in some sort of disguise and finish my work of getting a crew if I am mistaken."

So saying, Stanwood walked briskly away from the wharf.

Within the hour he returned, dressed elegantly as was his wont, clean shaven and very different in appearance from what he had been a short while before.

He walked rapidly to the end of the wharf, gazing eagerly seaward, and then said aloud:

"Too bad! too bad!"

"Ho, Master Stanwood, did you expect to sail in the Shark?" called out Skipper Lewis from the deck of his schooner.

"Ah, Captain Lewis, how are you?"

"Well, no, I did not expect to sail in the Shark, but I was anxious to see Mark before he left."

"But when do you sail?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Then dine with me at the Hen and Chickens Inn this afternoon, for I'm all alone."

"I'm too fond of a good dinner, Master Stanwood, to refuse," returned the skipper, pleased with the invitation.

"Well, we can have a good dinner, something sparkling to wash it down with and a little game of luck afterward, to kill a couple of hours."

"I'll be there, sir," returned the skipper, and two hours after he was ushered into the pleasant room of the young aristocrat, who always lived luxuriously when in the town.

After several times filling up his guest's glass, Stanwood said:

"I am sorry I did not see Montague before he sailed."

"He was on board my schooner before leaving and I've got a little work to do for him," said the now half-tipsy skipper.

"Well, I'll guarantee you'll do anything you are told to do, captain."

"But, by the way, when are those pirates to be hanged, for I wish to go home soon, but would wait for their stringing up if it was to be soon?"

"They won't hang until I get back, that is a certainty."

"What, have you been appointed hangman?"

"No, and I wouldn't put a rope around a man's neck for the price of my schooner; but the pirates are not here to hang."

"Indeed! why, did not Montague bring them with him?" innocently asked Stanwood.

"No, he left the chief, and badly wounded, at the town jail, and the others at the fort, where I am to get them on my way back, and bring them in irons on my schooner."

"It would not seem safe to me, for you only have half a dozen men, I believe."

"That's all—there—there! you'll get me a little tipsy, Master Stanwood, for that's the seventh glass you've helped me to."

"That won't hurt you; but I suppose you will have a soldier guard for the pirates?"

"No need of it, for they will all be heavily ironed and below decks."

Stanwood shuddered, for the remark recalled other men that had been ironed and below, when the sloop went down.

"Then I guess you can manage them."

"Oh yes, you may be sure I can, Master Stanwood."

"Do you take many passengers now, captain?"

"No, for my schooner is more of a freight-bearer, you know."

"But I take 'em when I can get 'em."

The half-drunken skipper did not see the flash of triumph that crossed the face of the young scamp, at his words, and having gotten all the news he wanted from the schooner's commander, Stanwood did not urge when he said that he must take his leave.

"Come down and see me off, Master Stanwood, for I like you, and you're a good fellow."

"I'll be there, Captain Lewis, to wish you a pleasant voyage," was the reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NET SPREADING.

TRUE to his promise, Merton Stanwood was down to the wharf, to bid the skipper of the schooner *bon voyage*.

He had gone half an hour before the sailing time, and found Captain Lewis in a very bad humor.

"Why you look as glum as a schoolmaster, captain, so what ails you?" he asked.

"Why a cussed chap came along here an hour ago, offering a bounty for sailors for a special cruise, and three of my men went with him."

"They were good fellows, but the promise of a bounty was too much for them, and I lost them and have to ship three fresh hands I picked up on the wharf here."

"That is provoking, but I hope the new ones will prove as good as the old."

"But you have some passengers, I see!" and Stanwood glanced toward a group standing on the deck of the schooner.

"Yes, they are builders going to the shipyards in Bath, and I took the party, for there are nine of them, and they don't wish the best accommodations, and it's lucky they don't for they wouldn't get 'em."

"I'd have gone with you too, if I'd have known last night I could get off; but I will take the stage home."

"I wish you could go with me, Master Stanwood, for, as a sailor, I can't see how a man who has followed the sea can ride in one of those stages."

"It is hard, I admit, but do you notice how hot the war rumors are to-day, captain?"

"Yes, and I tell you there is going to be trouble."

"There certainly will be, and soon; but I won't detain you, so wish you good-by and a quick run home."

The skipper grasped his hand, and Stanwood went out on the wharf and walked away, as he saw the schooner cast off.

"Well, my plan worked well, for now, with the bogus passengers and the three new seamen, I have twelve men on board against the skipper and his old crew of three.

"It was a lucky thing my seeing Mark Montague board that schooner yesterday.

"I have faith in that young fellow I made leader, and he little dreamed that I, whom he saw talking to Skipper Lewis to-day, was the old gray-haired man who engaged him for the work in hand.

"Ha! ha! I am getting to be a deep plotter, and can disguise myself thoroughly.

"Now to go to the Kennebec with all speed, for the commodore told me Mark would go there to settle the matter about the brig and her battery, which old Patterson is so anxious to secure."

So saying, Stanwood returned to the tavern where he was putting up, and an hour after, by special conveyance, was driving rapidly along the highway to Portland, from which place he meant to catch the stage home, as he did not wish to attract attention going to his native town in a private vehicle.

Arriving at home he gave his father a bundle of papers, containing the latest news, and was congratulated upon returning from Boston looking so well, for he usually came back in a most demoralized condition.

"I have reformed, father, as I told you I would," was the reply of the young villain, who, becoming more steeped in sin, had given up hard drink that he might the better plot out devilry.

After an hour spent at home Stanwood sought the jail, and asked permission of Luke West, to see the pirate captain.

"There are no orders against it, Master Merton, and I suppose you may, as you say you heard in Boston just what was to be done with the pirates, and wish to see if you cannot find out if he won't tell you where he buried certain treasures."

"Yes, for treasures will be of no service to him, Luke, and if I can get him to give me the information, I will buy a craft with it and turn her into a privateer; but this is confidential, Luke, you know."

"Yes, sir, and it does look like war, I declare."

"It does indeed; but how is the prisoner?"

"One of the men died two days ago, but the others are improving, while the chief may live or die, as he seems to hang on the same way as when he came here."

"He better die, if he wants to escape the rope," was the reply.

Then he added:

"Any hostile feeling been shown him of late?"

"No, sir, the people keep very quiet about him."

"But Miss Allene Montague has sent nice things for the pirates to eat, each day, and seems kind to him, after his having run off with her as he did."

Merton Stanwood frowned, but made no reply, and following the jailer he was led up to the cell where the pirate was lying, appearing the same as when he had seen him ten days before.

The gaze of the pirate chief met his, as he entered, and then, as Luke West departed, he asked quietly:

"Well, what luck?"

"The best," was the low, earnest response.

CHAPTER XV.

STANWOOD'S VISIT TO THE PIRATE.

WELL, what have you done?" quietly asked the pirate, as Stanwood took a seat near his cot.

"First tell me how you are?"

"About the same."

"Then you are unable to move?"

"Trust me for being ready when the time comes."

"But it may be within three days."

"Do not fear for me."

"You are a remarkable man, for you look half dead now."

"All right, now go on with your story."

"I went to Boston, began to look about for a crew, caught sight of Mark Montague going on board a Kennebec coaster, and took the right idea of what he was after."

"The news had been received of how he captured the French sloop-of-war."

"Yes, with the aid of the soldiers, and catching the cruiser in a trap."

"No matter how he did it, he was successful, and it is another feather in his cap."

"Curse him! his luck is wonderful."

"Yes, but to your story?"

"I surmised, having heard that he left your

crew at the fort, that he was going to get Captain Lewis of the coasting schooner to fetch them to Boston."

"You have the requisite of a fine villain—you have your wits about you."

"I care not for such comments."

"As you please."

"Well, I got Lewis tipsy and wormed it out of him."

"He had a crew of six men, and sometimes took passengers of a second class."

"I got hold of a good fellow, engaged him to get a man to buy off three of Lewis's crew, had other men on hand at the time, waiting for a berth, and then sent nine pretended ship carpenters on board, bound for the yards at this place."

"That gave Lewis three men of his crew, besides himself, and twelve men for us on board."

"You are a good plotter, Stanwood."

"My mate is to seize the schooner, not injuring Lewis or his men, and run to a retreat near the mouth of the river, where he is to wait to hear from me."

"With the order for the prisoners, he can then go to the fort and get them, so you will have your old crew and the twelve men, my mate to be second in command."

"He will deserve it if he is successful, and shall have the berth."

"And then?"

"When Mark Montague comes into the river, my mate on the schooner will know, for he is to have a lookout on watch constantly."

"Then he is to get the prisoners, after night-fall, sail up the river, anchor near the brig and await your coming."

"I will see that Mark Montague is kidnapped and taken on board the schooner, while you will then only have to board the brig, cut her out and escape to sea."

"It is a well-arranged plot, and I thank you."

"But how are you to get hold of the middy?"

"I have a little plot to do that, and it can be done without suspicion."

"Or harm to him ashore, for there must be no violence, or it may spoil all."

"True, and there shall be none."

"But how about your escape?"

"Leave that to me."

"Can you accomplish it?"

"Yes."

"But how?"

"I do not care to tell you."

"There must be no failure."

"There shall be none."

"Do you see yonder window in the Sailors' Delight Inn?"

"Yes."

"You can see it distinctly from where you lie on your cot?"

"Yes."

"There is a red curtain to it?"

"I see it."

"When you see that curtain drawn across the window, you may know that the Shark has arrived in port, so prepare to escape that night."

"When night comes, and you see a lamp set close behind the red curtain, it will tell you that the schooner has dropped anchor near the brig, having the prisoners on board, and also Mark Montague."

"Then you can go aboard when you please, and the sooner the better."

"All right, I understand, and I may as well give you the balance of your pay now in gems, as I may not see you again."

"Our contract will still hold good, I suppose, to have a share with you in your booty?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I hardly know yet just what I will do, until I get to sea."

"But if I need your services at any time, I will communicate with you, at the old rendezvous on the coast, and you shall be liberally paid."

"Now you had better go."

After telling the pirate the excuse he had made to the jailer to see him, Merton Stanwood took his departure.

"It is no use, Luke, for he says he has no treasure anywhere; but I am much obliged to you," and passing out of the jail Stanwood went in search of his boon companions, Walter Patterson and Vincent Ream.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

THE two worthies, Vincent Ream and Walter Patterson, were not hard to find, though they were not about their old lurking place, the tavern tap-room.

The citizens seemed to be a trifle bewildered

at the conduct of the precious trio of scamps, for while Stanwood had been away in Boston, Vincent and Walter had completely reformed, had attended church and prayer meetings, and their kindred were beginning to have hopes of them.

Then too Merton Stanwood had returned from Boston looking well and not intoxicated, while he was seen to go into the tavern and chat awhile with the landlord, and leave it without taking a drink.

As the three chums met, they strolled down the street to the shore, and the two who had stayed at home eagerly questioned Stanwood as to his trip.

"Well, all is arranged, and as soon as Montague comes into port, and he is on the way, he will be kidnapped."

"By whom?"

"Caspar, as I said."

"He's about dead."

"Not so near dead as it is thought."

"What can he do with the boy?"

"Carry him to sea in a vessel, which he will capture, for his crew are not far away."

"Oh! I've plotted well, lads."

"I hope he won't take father's brig again."

"No, I guess not, for he thinks there is a large force of soldiers on her, for so I told him."

"Guess he'll cut out old Connors's schooner, and we don't care if he does," said Stanwood, and as old Connors was a man supremely hated in the town, the two others seemed to take pleasure in the prospect of his losing his schooner.

"But what about the cash, lads?"

"I've got mine, for the old man forked over soon as I told him I had sworn off," said Walter.

"Well, I got all the old lady had, and she borrowed some more to make up the balance for me, as she was delighted at my good intentions," Vincent Ream remarked.

"Good! I will hand it over, with mine, to Caspar," and he took the money from his two friends and pocketed it, they little dreaming that he was making them pay for what he had already been paid for doing, and most liberally.

But then Merton Stanwood's love of gold was a ruling passion with him.

"Now, lads, we have got to get hold of Mark Montague ourselves."

The two did not seem to enjoy this part of the programme.

"We dare not trust to others, and get ourselves in a box, for we have had enough of that."

They shuddered at the remembrance.

"Now we three can handle him."

"We ought, but we will be known."

"My plan is to disguise ourselves and catch him unawares."

"My idea is to send a note, as from the pirate chief, asking him to visit him at the jail at a certain time."

"He will be at home, of course, for it must be done at night, and will walk up to the town, as he always does."

"We can waylay him and catch him, and I will have a boat ready to take him on board of Caspar's craft."

"Now what do you say?"

"I am ready."

"And I; but Mark Montague is no easy one to kidnap."

"He will not suspect danger here at home."

"True; but how will we know when to act?"

"Hold yourselves in readiness all the time after nightfall, and I will post you."

"We go to prayer-meetings now, and I hope it won't interfere."

They laughed at the impious joke, and soon after parted company, Merton Stanwood telling them that he had brought disguises for them from Boston, and would arrange everything.

Then he went down the river road congratulating himself upon the stroke of fortune he had made, and that Mark Montague would soon come to the end of his rope.

He had taken the river road, and coming to the path leading off to the home of the Montagues, boldly turned into it.

Captain Montague and his wife were seated upon the piazza, overlooking the river, and both looked surprised as he turned the corner and came suddenly upon them.

They both arose, and Captain Montague said with cold courtesy:

"Mr. Stanwood, good-evening, sir."

"I called, Captain Montague, having only returned from Boston to-day, and thinking you might like to learn the particulars of Mark's gallant capture of the French sloop-of-war, for the town is wild over the daring deed."

He hit them in a tender spot, and the particulars they had heard of the affair they had gleaned from the papers, which in those early days were not of much importance.

Their love of their son at once caused them to unbend a little, and Captain Montague said:

"Be seated, Mr. Stanwood, and we will be glad to know what information you have."

"Ellen, my dear, will you first call Chloe to bring some wine."

"Oh, thank you, Captain Montague, but I do not drink now, sir, as I have cast all my bad habits behind me," said Merton Stanwood, with a look of feigned horror at his past.

"I am glad to hear that, sir, for your own sake."

"But did you see Mark in Boston?"

"Only caught a glimpse of him as he went on board his schooner to put to sea, for he is now bound home."

"Indeed, this is glad tidings," said the mother.

"My father gave me a letter, introducing me to the commodore, and he told me all about Mark's daring capture of the Frenchman, and he praised him most highly," and the designing villain, playing upon the parents' love for their noble son, went on telling all he had heard of the young midddy's bold capture.

After a visit of half an hour he arose and took his departure, without once asking about Allene as he had wished to, yet dared not do.

As the preserver of their daughter's life, and the bearer of news of their son, Merton Stanwood had received more courtesy at the hands of Captain Montague and his wife than he ever had believed possible, and he muttered in a low, triumphant tone:

"With Mark Montague out of the way, I will win them over, and I know that the girl loves me."

As he spoke, he started at a brisk pace for his walk home, feeling very thoroughly satisfied with himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SURPRISED SKIPPER.

THE good but lubberly schooner Kennebec Chief got up all sail in the run out of the harbor, and her skipper was glad to see that his new crew of three men worked well, but that his passengers were anxious to "lend a hand."

A good supper was served in the cabin, and the passengers fell to with a will, but having in his mind the meal of the day before, with the delicious wine and Merton Stanwood for company, Skipper Lewis did not enjoy it as he might otherwise have done.

There was one young man among the passengers who quite won the skipper's heart.

He was a good-looking fellow, with a face that was a trifle reckless, and a free-and-easy manner, and his frame was well knit, his movements quick and decided.

He told a good story, sung well, could dance a hornpipe to perfection, and was a good sailor.

Showing off his accomplishments the night the schooner left port and was sailing slowly along over a moonlit sea, the skipper became charmed in his young passenger, and said to him in his enthusiasm:

"What's your name, young man?"

"Harry Hawley, sir."

"Where do you hail from?"

"Baltimore, sir."

"Well, you are a fine fellow, and I wish you'd be my mate, in place of the man who left me."

"Why, with you along, the voyage would always be a short one."

"I've a mind to take you at your offer, skipper."

"Wish you would, my lad, for I like you."

"I'm going up with my mates, as we told you, to the shipyards at Bath, where we've got work; but if you mean your offer I'll drop anchor on board at once."

"I'll offer you ten dollars a month over what I can get a good man for, if you'll come with me."

"Agreed!"

"When will you begin?"

"Put me on duty at once, if you wish."

"No; you begin in daylight, for it's bad luck for a new man to go to work aboard ship at night."

"So I've heard; so I'll start fresh at eight bells in the morning."

Thus it was arranged, and Jack Hawley became mate of the Kennebec Chief.

The schooner was by no means a fleet craft, and when she was going fast it was only when a gale was blowing.

But she carried a large cargo, was a good, dry

boat, stanch and steady, and her skipper was rated as one of the best seamen on the coast.

Keeping steadily on her course, blow it light or heavy, she kept up a large spread of canvas, where other and fleetier craft were wont to reef, and thus she often made quick runs, and taking the average by the year, was not much behind the "flyers" in the time of her voyages from port to port.

But the wind was ahead, and likely to continue so while it held light, so there was no prospect of a quick run on that voyage.

Several days, therefore, passed before the Kennebec Chief sighted Seguin Island late one afternoon.

The captain was below at supper, and Mate Harry Hawley was in charge of the deck.

Suddenly the three men of the old crew, who were seated by the caboose, eating their supper, felt themselves seized from behind, their throats were grasped in a grip that prevented outcry, and their hands and feet were quickly in irons.

A few moments after Skipper Lewis came on deck.

He had enjoyed his supper, had his pipe lit, and seemed at peace with all the world.

"Skipper!"

The word was uttered in the dulcet tones of Mate Hawley.

"Well, lad?"

"I regret to tell you that I have an unpleasant duty to perform."

"No; what is it?"

"Well, you see, your three men, those of the old crew, I just had put in irons."

"By Neptune's ghost, young man, but those men I know, and they are square and true, and you should consult me before you do such things."

"What on earth did they do?"

"They were square."

"Were what?"

"They were square men."

"So I told you."

"And so, as I could not corrupt them, and knew it, I put them in irons—nay, skipper, keep cool, for the other three members of your crew are my men, and so are the pretended passengers, and you are my prisoner!"

The old skipper was so amazed he stood like a statue, motionless and silent.

"Are you pirates?" he at last gasped.

"Yes, sir."

"And you've got my ship, for I'm no fool, to single-handed, fight twelve men here on deck, though, by the eternal, if I had only suspected it, I'd have come up armed and worked you a spell with my weapons."

"Skipper, you are a nice man, and a good fellow, so we mean no harm to you, or to your crew."

"You are pirates."

"Oh yes, but this craft is not exactly the one we would like to float a black flag over."

"Listen to me, and I'll tell you just what I intend to do."

"Oh, I'll listen, for it's about all I can do."

"Well, in learning that you had an order to bring back with you Captain Caspar and his crew, the former in your port, the latter in the port on the river, we concluded, rather than to see them hang, to rescue them."

"So we shipped on your vessel, and I possessed myself of the order you have for the prisoners."

"Young man, some day I'll dance at your hanging."

Harry Hawley laughed, and continued:

"Now we shall have to confine you and your men below, until we get the prisoners, and find another craft more suitable than this one."

"You will then be left in full possession, unharmed, and nothing on board disturbed, and no one will blame four men for being captured by twelve, especially when no suspicion was felt against them."

"Now, my dear skipper, as we are approaching the land, I will ask you to go below, and you must consent to be ironed, and also, while we are near the port, to be gagged, for no call, or anything else, must hazard our failure."

"Mate Hawley, you may rescue that red pirate Caspar, and his men, and go to sea in a good craft, but you mark my words, there is one who will hunt you down."

"Who is that, skipper?"

"The Royal Middy," was the reply.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RUSE.

THE schooner Kennebec Chief, after the change of masters and crew, held on her way in toward the land, at a point where she was to

find an anchorage and then communicate with Merton Stanwood by messenger.

This was done, and then the messenger returned from his night row up the river, to report that the Kennebec was to call at the fort for the pirate prisoners on the following night, just after dark.

Harry Hawley, as the young mate had said his name was, ran the schooner in toward the fort, dropped anchor and went ashore.

The major was found in his quarters, and the young outlaw presented to him the order for the prisoners, remarking at the time that the skipper was quite ill on board, so had sent him.

Not a shadow of suspicion attached itself to the act, in the mind of the major, and the forty odd pirates were removed from their prison and formed in line on the river-bank, awaiting to be taken on board the schooner.

Hawley had requested that they be heavily ironed, as the crew of the Kennebec was small, and they were to so be kept until they reached Boston.

Having gotten the prisoners on board, the schooner at once got under way and held on up the river, while several of the men with keys were busy freeing the pirates of their irons.

"What does it mean?" asked one of the pirate officers in amazement, who, with his comrades had been bewailing their departure for Boston, expecting it would soon end in their execution.

"It means you are free once more," coolly said Hawley.

"But you have released us?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

"I am acting under orders from Captain Caspar."

"Ah! he is not dead then?"

"No, indeed."

"And where is he?"

"In jail at Bath."

"How is he helping us then?"

"He has friends who are not in jail."

"And he will get out?"

"He will be on the deck of a fine vessel within a few hours."

"Now stretch your limbs, for you may have to fight to-night, as I know not just what is before us."

"Get your men together, tell them what it means, and, as we approach the town, all of you go below until you are called."

The pirate officer immediately obeyed, and stood among his comrades on deck watching and waiting for coming events.

As the lights of the town came in view, the released prisoners went below, and the schooner held on, according to orders, and dropped anchor not far from the brig Dare-Devil, which lay a cable's length off-shore.

Getting into a skiff, Hawley then pulled ashore at a secluded place, and as he drew near, was hailed in a low tone with:

"Boat ahoy, friend!"

"Friend ahoy!" was the response.

The answer seemed to satisfy the challenger, for he waited until the boat grounded and then said:

"So you are here?"

"Yes, but who are you?"

"Your friend who arranged with you in Boston, only in a different disguise."

"I see, and I am glad to meet you again."

"You got the prisoners all right?"

"Without any trouble."

"And all are ready?"

"Yes, I freed them of their irons on the way up."

"You were long in reaching here?"

"Light head-winds were the cause."

"The tide will be running out within half an hour, and the breeze is fair for you, and increasing."

"Oh, we will get out all right; but is that the brig?"

"Yes."

"I pulled near her and she looks like a beauty."

"She is."

"How many on board?"

"But four men, two on watch at a time."

"They will order us off."

"Doubtless, but say you come from the Shark, Midshipman Montague."

"Is she in port?"

"Yes, she lies up the river yonder at the shipyard, having some improvements made about her."

"I am glad she is not nearer."

"So am I; but did you have any trouble with Skipper Lewis?"

"Oh, no, and I shall be glad to set the old man free, for he's a good fellow."

"We'll hoist his flag to show distress, and when daylight comes it will be seen and they will go off and help him out of his scrape."

"And Captain Caspar?"

"I am waiting here for him now."

"No fear of his not getting out?"

"None."

"If he should not do so, I'll take the brig myself and put to sea in her," was the cool reply of Hawley.

"There he comes now," said the other, as a form was seen advancing slowly toward them.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FAIR LETTER-CARRIER.

THERE were certain changes which Mark Montague desired to have made in the *Shark*, and he had asked the commodore if he could not have the work done at the Kennebec shipyards.

The commodore had readily granted the request, and so the *Shark* had set sail, as the reader has seen.

Her young commander went slowly along the coast, looking in at all suspicious places, and at last ran into the Kennebec.

He was fond of his little vessel, for she was very stanch, fleet as the wind, and a beauty.

Her battery of nine guns were a formidable armament and her crew of sixty men were to be depended upon.

She had a large boat, in which one of the six-pounders from the schooner could be mounted, for a run in-shore where the *Shark* dare not venture, and she was complete in every particular, excepting the working of her ports did not suit Mark, and those he wished to have altered to his entire satisfaction.

So the *Shark* was run up to the shipyards upon her arrival, the crew allowed to take half a day off in turns, and Mark went to his home to enjoy the few days that he would be in port.

He wished to also see the schooner *Kennebec* Chief arrive, and depart with her prisoners in safety, and he kept it secret that she was to perform that duty.

Then Mark felt at liberty to go on a cruise for new adventures and added fame.

His parents and sister warmly welcomed him, while Charcoal received a most enthusiastic greeting from his father and mother in the kitchen.

Mark frowned when told of the visit of Merton Stanwood to his parents, and, with a quick glance at his sister, said:

"Somehow I have no faith in Merton Stanwood, and I believe he is a hypocrite of the worst kind."

"If I wrong him, I am sorry, but I cannot trust him, and, if he has reformed, he is playing some deep game, I feel assured."

"Vincent Ream and Walter Patterson have also reformed, brother," quietly said Allene, and she added:

"They did so at the instigation of Master Merton."

"They are just as bad as he, I fear, and I will not trust them."

"I fear you show too strong a prejudice here, my son," the captain remarked.

"I am sorry if I misjudge them, but somehow I doubt the three of them," answered Mark, and the subject was dropped then, but renewed again between the young midshipman and his sister, as they took a row on the river that afternoon.

"Sis," said Mark, and Allene knew at once why he had asked her to go for a row with him.

"Well, Mark?"

"Have you seen Stanwood lately?"

"Yes."

"How often?"

"To speak with him?"

"Yes."

"Once before he went to Boston, and once since his return."

"Well?"

"I can tell you nothing new, Mark."

"He asked you to marry him?"

"Yes."

"And your answer?"

"That I could give him no answer."

"Allene, do you love that man?"

"Brother, I do not know, but once I thought so, now I do not."

"What has changed you?"

"I cannot tell."

"Well, sister Allene, I beg you to beware of him, for I feel that he is even worse than he seems."

"What do you know?"

"Nothing, and yet I saw him in Boston."

"He did not think that I did, and he dodged me."

"He was unshaven, seedy, trying to disguise himself, and for no good purpose."

"I feel that he is a worse villain than he has credit of being, and I shall keep as close a watch on him as I do upon smugglers, that, if he is a bad man, I can expose him to open your eyes."

"Now I will not worry you again about him until I have facts to give you."

Two days after, Mark was standing alone at the retreat on the rock before referred to, watching the sun set behind the hills, when he heard the clatter of hoofs.

Soon a horse and rider turned out of the pine woods, and came along the path leading to the cabin home of the Montagues.

Mark saw a spirited pony, and his face flushed as he recognized the rider.

It was Lola Stanwood, a young and beautiful little child-woman.

She sat her horse well, and seeing Mark, drew rein and called out:

"Here, Master Mark, I have come to see you."

Mark hastily descended the path, and soon stood by the side of the horse.

"Help me to dismount, for I wish to rest, as Fidget has nearly broken my arms holding him in."

Mark aided her to the ground, and said:

"Will you not come to the house, for my parents and sister would be glad to see you?"

"No, for I came to see you, Sir Middy of the Royal Navy, and I'll sit yonder on that rock, if you will hitch my horse."

Mark fastened Fidget to a tree, and then joined Lola, who stood by the lonely grave in the pines, for it had caught her eye.

"Master Mark," she said, slowly, as he came up.

"Well, Miss Lola?"

"Is this the grave of the officer your father killed in a duel, long years ago?"

"Yes."

"I have heard so much said about that affair, that I wish you would tell me the truth about it."

"I only know, Miss Lola, that twenty odd years ago my father fought a duel on this spot with a brother officer."

"My father was wounded, but killed his adversary, and had him buried here."

"And he placed this stone over his grave?"

"Yes, Miss Lola."

"It was kind of your father, Mark; but, oh! how thoughtless I am, for I came here to bring you a letter."

"Bring me a letter, Miss Lola?" asked Mark, in surprise.

"Yes, for brother Merton was out riding on horseback, and as he passed the jail, Mr. West came out and said that that awful pirate, Captain Caspar, had written you a letter, and would he take it to you."

"Brother Merton said he had to stop in town, so gave me the letter to fetch to you; here it is, and I shall offer to take an answer back, if there is any, after which I must go home, for it is getting late."

"But, oh! how handsome you do look in your uniform, Master Mark! And when you get to be a captain, a real captain, I mean, I'll marry you, if you ask me."

Mark turned crimson at the frank words of the little lady, and taking the letter, hastily broke the seal.

"It is simply a request from Captain Caspar, written by Mrs. West at his dictation, for me to come and see him to-night, as he has an important communication to make."

"Then there is no answer?"

"Only that I will come, you can tell Mr. West, if you are riding back to town, Miss Lola."

"Yes, I'll tell him; but when do you go to sea?"

"Within three days, I hope."

"Brother Merton said he was going to ask you to come up to Rock Hill to dine with us, and father said that he hoped you would come, and I say that you must."

"I will call and pay my respects to your father—"

"And to me?"

"Yes, and to you, Miss Lola, before I sail, thank you," was the reply.

"Well, I must go now, if you'll help me to mount."

Mark brought the pony, raised the fair rider to her saddle, and, kissing her hand, she dashed away, just as Allene came up the path, and cried:

"Ah, Mark, I caught you that time, sir."

"What if I should be talking to Master Stanwood for half an hour in the pines, eh?"

"Lola is but a child, sis," answered Mark, more confused than he cared to confess at his sister's words.

"Well, I came to call you to supper," she replied, and after the meal, as it was growing dark, Mark started to town to obey the summons of the pirate captain.

CHAPTER XX.

BETRAYED.

WHEN Mark left home it was some little time after dark.

He could have gone by the river, and called Charcoal to row him up to town, if he did not care to use the oars himself; but the negro was so happy in being at home that he did not disturb him.

Then he rather liked the walk, and so set out on foot.

He wondered what it was that Captain Caspar wanted to communicate.

He had been to see him since his return, and found him still lying in that silent way, and looking wretchedly.

That the pirate would get well he could not believe, and the town physician told him there was little, if any hope, as the case was a strange one.

"Not a murmur does he give, and I dare not probe for the bullet, as I fear it may cause hemorrhage, and he is dying by inches," the doctor said.

"May he not be trying to die, to save himself from the gallows, doctor?" Mark had asked.

"It has been in my thought that such was the case, and I hope he may, for I like the fellow immensely."

So Mark, receiving the letter, wondered what the pirate had to say.

Why had he asked him to come by night to see him, at a time when the jail was closed to visitors?

But Mark walked leisurely along until he reached the summit of a hill that brought the lights of the town full before him.

For an instant he paused to survey the scene, and just then received a stunning blow upon the back of the head.

At the same instant he was seized by two men, and borne to the ground.

Mark had been struck only with a fist, but the blow had been a hard one, and for a moment he was dazed.

But, as he felt himself in the grasp of enemies, he struggled to free himself, and so powerful was he, and so agile, that the two had to call the assistance of a third man, who stood near.

He sprung to their rescue, and after a hard struggle of a few minutes, Mark Montague was in irons, his feet were bound together, and a gag was forced into his mouth.

Then a bandage was placed over his eyes, and another over his ears, after which the three assailants raised him in their arms and bore him away from the highway, down the hillside toward the river.

Except the sharp call, "Come, or he'll master us!" and which brought the third man to the help of his comrades, not a word had been spoken by them.

They had exerted all their strength, and found it a most difficult matter to master the powerful young middy.

Arriving upon the river-bank, they laid him down upon the fine straw, and two of them remained with him, while the third, after a few words in a low tone, had walked away, disappearing in the darkness in the direction of the town.

There is no need to tell the reader that the three men were Merton Stanwood and his two allies in sin.

They were completely disguised, and Mark failed to recognize them.

What was to be done with him, he did not know.

At first he believed that he was in the power of some of the pirate captain's band, who had escaped capture, and meant to be avenged upon him.

Then, as they bore him down toward the river, the appalling thought came over him that, all bound as he was, they meant to throw him into the river, and thus end his career.

With the bandage over his ears, he could not hear.

With the blindfold over his eyes, he could not see, and the gag prevented him from utterance.

Then, too, his wrists were in irons, and his feet were tightly bound together.

So he was powerless, and lay in pain and misery awaiting the end, whatever it might be.

In the mean time Merton Stanwood had gone

toward the town, and stood at a point below the wharves.

His eyes were upon a schooner that was creeping up the river and soon after dropped anchor near the brig.

It was growing late, and soon he saw a boat coming inshore and hailed as the reader has seen, and with a result already known.

That Captain Caspar had sent the letter to Mark was true, and Merton Stanwood knowing that it had been agreed between them to get the midshipman to come from home after nightfall, felt assured that this was the pirate's plot, and so had given the missive to his little sister Lola to deliver.

Then, as it grew dark, the three friends went to the rendezvous on the highway, each going alone, and Stanwood carried with him a bundle, which contained the disguises he had secured in Boston.

These were hastily donned, and soon after Mark Montague was seen approaching.

The three men crouched by the roadside, in the shelter of a huge rock, and sprung out as Mark passed within a couple of feet of them.

Thus far had all gone well, and when Stanwood, and also Harry Hawley beheld a man approaching, whom the former pronounced to be the pirate chief, the success of their plot seemed assured.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PIRATE'S SECRET.

THE many dainties sent to the wounded chief, at the jail, were made by Allene Montague, and old Uncle Abram was sent quite often with a basket containing something for the wounded man.

On one occasion, the day before the sending of the letter of the chief by Lola Stanwood, Allene had boldly gone to the jail and asked to see the pirate Caspar, saying that she had something of importance to ask him.

Luke West at once ushered her into the jail, and went to ask Caspar the Corsair if he would see her.

"Yes, for it is kind of her to come, and I suppose she bears a message from her brother," was the reply.

"So I think," Luke West rejoined, and Allene was led to the cell where lay the wounded pirate.

She spoke kindly to him, asked how he was, and, as the jailer left them alone, she asked quickly:

"When will you be able to leave here?"

"Why do you ask, lady?"

"Because I will not see you die on the gallows."

"How can you prevent it, Miss Montague?"

"I will pledge myself to save you, only you must give up your evil life."

"Leave your wild career of outlawry and murder, and if you must go to sea and fight, go into the privateering, for the news comes now that war is inevitable."

"You would not have me fight against America?" he asked.

"Use your own judgment as to that, sir, for I cannot advise you there."

"And you would have me escape?"

"Yes, and I have been plotting and planning how to do so, for the past two weeks."

"But, as soon as you are able to leave here, I will see that you escape, for you were kind to me, and I will repay the debt of gratitude I owe."

"But how can you, a woman, free me from this place?"

"I came to tell you that I would send you files, a rope and knife, in the food I make for you, and you can then make your own exit from this window, which opens upon the street."

"If they thought you able to move, they would not keep you in this room, and as soon as you can, you had better escape."

"If you will say now what night, I will meet you outside, with clothing and money, for you will need it, and in disguise you can readily escape."

"God bless you, sweet lady, but let me tell you a secret, yet I thank you just the same."

"I have with me, sewed up in my clothes, files and a knife."

"I also have ample means in the shape of precious stones that always bring gold."

"I have filed yonder two bars, at the top, entirely in two, so that they will bend over and permit me to pass through them, and I have made me a rope, by plaiting together strips of my bed clothing and bandages."

"When I was wounded the bullet struck me just here, near my heart, and entered."

"But it passed just through a miniature that I wear, and so cut into the flesh and glancing on the bone, turned and made merely a flesh wound."

"I extracted the bullet myself, while the doctor seeing the wound, feared to probe for it, believing that it would kill me to do so."

"So I have laid here, biding my time by day, and improved the hours by night."

"I have tortured my features into abject suffering and no one believes but that I am hovering between life and death, when the truth is I am all right."

"Now do not worry your little head any more about my escape, for some morning you will hear that I am gone, and when you hear that Caspar the Corsair is again at his old piratical acts, do not believe them, for I pledge you now that I will never again float the black flag, or do a lawless act, after I leave the Kennebec River."

"Now you know my secret, Miss Montague, and I

hope you will believe that I will keep my word to you."

"Now you had better go, but we shall meet again, see if we do not."

"Good-by, and I will trust in your word," she said softly and turned away.

"And so that devil Stanwood would have me hang her noble brother, would he?"

"Well, he will see what I will do—I will warn him, by sending a letter asking him to come here to see me after nightfall."

"Then I will tell him he has foes, and to return home by the river, so as not to fall into their clutches."

"Having saved him, I will seize the brig, and that shall be my last lawless act."

So said Caspar, after Allene had left him once more alone.

And he wrote the letter, but it led Mark Montague right into the trap that he wished to save him from.

Until quite a late hour the pirate awaited for Mark's coming, and grew anxious as he failed to come.

Then the lights were put out in the jail, the doors were doubly bolted for the night and all was still.

At last the pirate arose from his bed and placed a paper, with a few lines he had already written, upon his pillow.

They were:

"Thanking Jailer West for his kindness, and that of his wife to me, I now bid them farewell, as I feel fully able to leave to-night."

"In my escape I have been helped by no one, as I had files secreted about my clothes, prepared for just such an emergency, and the ropes I made, as will be seen by a glance at them."

"Will Jailer West say to Merchant Patterson that I take the liberty of honoring his beautiful brig, the Dare-Devil, as I did once before, but I shall soon send him the price of her full value in good British gold."

"Not wishing to hang as a pirate, I now take my leave, with the sincere regret that I cannot carry my poor wounded comrades with me."

"With gratitude and respect."

"I am Jailer West's obedient servant,"

"CASPAR, THE CORSAIR."

Such was the strange epistle laid on the pillow of the cot, and then, being ready to depart, the pirate bent back the iron bars, passed through, and, having made his rope fast, slipped quickly down to the street, noiselessly and unseen.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRIEND OR FOE.

THE one whom the disguised Stanwood saw approaching, was indeed the pirate, Caspar.

He had gotten out of the jail, as the reader has seen, and discovering no one to bar his way, had walked as briskly as his stiffened limbs, from long confinement, would permit.

He walked straight up to the two men, for there was the spot where Stanwood had appointed to meet him.

"Ah! I congratulate you, sir," said Stanwood, eagerly.

"I recognize your voice, but knew you not in that disguise."

"But your comrade?" and the pirate spoke coldly.

"Is the young man of whom I spoke?"

"Ah, yes."

"Mr. Hawley, this is Captain Caspar," said Stanwood.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Hawley, and your presence here proves your success."

"Yes, Captain Caspar, I have eleven men of my own, and forty-three of your crew, on yonder schooner lying off there, and all we have to do is to capture the brig."

"You have done well, Mr. Hawley, and I shall be glad to have you serve as my first officer."

"Let me see, forty-three and eleven are fifty-four men, with you and I."

"Not a bad crew to begin with, though I shall get a score more, as the brig will need them."

"Now, sir, we are square, I believe?" and he turned to Merton Stanwood.

"We will be, sir, when you keep the rest of your contract."

"And what is that?"

"To carry my prisoner to sea with you, and hang him, as he would you."

"I had forgotten that, but where is he?"

"Yonder in that wooded point."

"We will pull there in the boat and get him."

"He is the one of whom you spoke?"

"Yes, sir."

"And unharmed?"

"Excepting for the gag and iron that keep him safe."

"Let us get him at once."

They entered the boat and pulled to the point, Merton Stanwood himself having to take the oars.

A low call brought Vincent Ream and Walter Patterson to the shore bearing their prisoner, and Mark was placed in the boat.

"Good-night sir," coldly said the pirate, and Hawley now taking the oars pulled away, leaving the three comrades in quiet standing upon the shore and watching the boat, while they congratulated themselves upon their success.

The boat pulled for the schooner, and soon after the three heard a hail from the brig.

The answer was:

"I am Montague of the king's cruiser Shark, and have secret orders for you."

"Ay, ay, sir, come alongside," came the answer. Stanwood listened attentively, while Walter Patterson asked excitedly:

"What does that mean, Mark?"

"See! they are setting sail on the brig, and getting up the anchor."

"They certainly are, and your father has again lost his brig," replied the treacherous Stanwood.

"I will give the alarm and—"

"Fool! would you betray yourself and us, for people would ask why you are abroad at this time."

"No, get home as quickly as possible, before some one else gives the alarm, and we are seen."

"I will see you to-morrow," and the wicked trio quickly dispersed.

In the meantime the brig's sail was set, the anchor was hauled up, the few men on board were bound, gagged and placed in the dark, while the Dare-Devil glided away from her anchorage as silently as the ghost of a ship.

Down the river she headed, and once well under way Captain Caspar went down into the cabin, where he had had Mark Montague borne.

The cabin lamp was quickly lighted, and bending over the midgy, the pirate removed the bandages from over his ears and eyes, withdrew the gag from his mouth and then began to free him from the ropes that bound his feet and the irons upon his wrists. At first Mark could not see, nor could he speak, after the bandage was taken from his eyes and the gag from his mouth.

But the pirate took a pitcher from the table and gave him a swallow of water.

"So I am your prisoner, sir, and you have escaped?" said Mark at last, gazing with amazement upon the man he believed to be lying at the point of death.

"Midshipman Montague, I have escaped, as you say, but you are not my prisoner, for in a short while I shall place you in the boat, with the four men I captured on this brig, and let you return to your home, in fact to your vessel and come in chase of me."

"I did not, as you believe, capture you; but you have foes in your town, and when I tell you that they are the three who kidnapped you to-night, and were in disguise, you may guess who they were."

"They served me, as one of them did, as he has before, and was paid for his services, though a part of my contract I will not keep with them, which was that I should take you to sea and hang you."

"I shall release you instead, and I had Mrs. West write you for me the past day, asking you to visit me in jail, that I might warn you of your danger."

"I was not as seriously wounded as I caused you and others to believe, deceiving even your surgeon and the town doctor, so I was enabled to escape, as you see."

"I am now going to sea, Midshipman Montague, and the course I steer will, I think, keep me out of your way, for I shall no longer be known as Caspar the Corsair, for there is work to do for an American privateer, I think, or will be soon, and I suppose you will serve your country too in the struggle?"

The pirate paused, seeming anxious to learn just which side Mark meant to go with in the coming struggle; but, ignoring the question, he said:

"Captain Caspar, I thank you for giving me my liberty, as you say, and I appreciate it; but let me tell you, that, as a king's officer, if I meet you on the high seas, I shall do my best to capture you."

Captain Corsair laughed lightly, and replied:

"If you meet me as a foe, you are at liberty to do so, sir; but I intend to be your friend, not your foe."

"Now, however, I will let you go back, so will free the men on deck of their bonds."

"And let me say, sir, that there are on this schooner Kennebec Chief, her captain and crew in irons, for my lieutenant, acting for me, used your order for my prisoners, and got them from the fort."

"What! has this been done?"

"All are free, sir, and I have a fine crew aboard the brig, Mr. Montague, which my lieutenant cleverly released for me."

"Now, sir, come on deck with me, for, not yet acquainted with the brig's larder, I can offer you not even a glass of wine."

He led the way on deck, and Mark, to his amazement and chagrin, saw that the pirate did indeed have a fine crew, and that the battery on the brig, mounted as Merchant Patterson had had it, made her a most formidable vessel.

The boat towing astern, and which had been bought from the Kennebec chief, was now hauled alongside, Mark Montague, and the four dejected seamen of the brig entered it, and the pirate raised his hat in adieu as the little skiff went dancing away in the wake, while the Dare-Devil swept majestically on.

It was a hard pull against the tide, back to the schooner, but the boat was alongside of her within an hour, and in ten minutes after the pretty craft went flying seaward, in chase of the captured brig, while Skipper Lewis and his men were released by the four men left behind by Mark to look after them and also to tell the story of Caspar the Corsair's escape, and cutting out of the beautiful Dare-Devil.

When by sunrise the news was known, the denizens of the town were almost wild with excitement, while three young men, learning that Caspar the Corsair had deliberately released the midgy, and supposing that he had betrayed them, at once decided that they would leave for other scenes, and when the sun went down on Bath that day, Merton Stanwood, Vincent Ream and Walter Patterson were far away on their road to Boston, the two latter having forced their selfish comrade, by threats, to share his money with them, which he was really glad to do, for he wanted company in his flight.

But he took right good care to say nothing of the gems that had been given him by Caspar the Corsair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRAITOR OR PATRIOT.

At any other time than just then, the escape of Captain Caspar and the capture of the brig would have created a greater excitement; but the day after the occurrence news came from Boston of a fight between the British soldiers and armed colonists, and all other occurrences were swallowed up in this startling intelligence.

The capture of Mark Montague, and his release by Caspar, could not be understood, and there seemed upon the whole affair of the Corsair a strange mystery.

That Mark had gone in chase of the brig all knew, and many predicted that he would capture her.

But in that case, what would he do with her?

Would he return her to Merchant Patterson, or give her up to the British?

Would he go with his own vessel, the Shark, to side with the British, or would he enter the service of the colonies with her?

If the former, he would be a most dangerous foe, knowing the river and coast as he did.

These thoughts and queries caused great excitement in the town.

The news that war had actually begun also excited the populace, and young men were starting forth to join the patriotic Americans in the coming struggle.

That trio of sinners, Merton Stanwood, Vincent Ream and Walter Patterson, had the credit of being the very first to volunteer, the real cause of their very sudden departure not being known.

Poor Merchant Patterson was almost heart-broken over the loss of his brig; but he bravely made up his mind to build another, and give it to Mark to command, if he did not side with the British.

At the little house on the river, the various news fell like a bombshell.

Mark had not returned home when his parents and sister retired, but no harm was thought of it.

Then in the morning Abram got the news, and it became known how he had been captured, and released by Caspar, though who his captors were no one knew, and that the Shark had gone in chase of the brig.

The captain at once went up to the town and saw the men who had been upon the brig, and heard all that they could tell.

Then he returned home, and the strange affairs were talked over with his wife and daughter, and a great deal of anxiety was felt by all three as to the future of the daring middy.

And what of the one of whom so much was being said?

He had gone in hot chase of the brig, but upon running out of the river not a sign of the fugitive could be seen.

A small coaster was sighted, coming down the coast and running near, Mark hailed and asked regarding the brig.

A vessel of the brig's description had been seen some distance off, during the night, heading along the coast toward Portland.

So on the Shark sped, and hailing another coaster, coming out of Portland, the following conversation took place:

"Have you seen an armed brig in port?"

"No, and I hain't wanting to, as thar is heaps o' trouble in the land with the news just come in, and I'm going home to lay up my sloop."

"What is the news?"

"The Red-Coats and the Colonists have had a big battle."

"Is this true?"

"It is, cap'n."

"Where did it occur?"

"Down toward Lexington, somewhar, I heard, and I tell you there's heaps o' excitement back yonder in port, and folks is arming rapidly."

"Be you a king's ship?"

"Yes."

"Good-by," and the skipper of the little sloop seemed glad to hold on his way and escape the dangerous vicinity of a king's cruiser.

Mark was impressed by what he had heard, and paced the deck for some time in thoughtful mood.

"My duty is plain."

"I must go to Boston at once," he said.

Then he gave the order to lay the course for Boston, and the little schooner went speeding along, while her young commander said to himself:

"Now comes the question, and I must act, for it will be traitor to king or Colonies."

"In other words, traitor or patriot."

"With me, situated as I am, there can be but one choice."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OUTLAWED MIDDY.

"MIDSHIPMAN Montague to see you, sir?"

The marine who spoke, addressed Commodore Rutledge, who was anxiously pacing his room, his brow clouded.

The town was in a whirl of excitement, the people had at last acted, blows had been struck by patriots against king's soldiers, and all in and about Boston was now a military camp.

"Show him in at once, sir," said the commodore, and then he added:

"Now I will see what Montague can tell me of the feeling of the people down East. Ah, my midshipman friend, I am glad to see you. But these are troublous times now."

"Sad times indeed, Commodore Rutledge," said Mark, with pale face and clouded brow.

"When did you arrive?"

"Only an hour ago, sir."

"And where from?"

"The Kennebec, and I have come to make my report, sir, and regret I have not better news."

"Ah! you bring bad news, too?"

"Captain Caspar has again escaped."

"The saints preserve us! Can this be so?"

"It is, sir."

Then Mark told how Skipper Lewis, of the Kennebec Chief had been mastered, and the major commanding the fort had given over the prisoners to their confederates.

He told, too, of his having been led into a trap, of the escape of the pirate captain and captain of the brig.

The commodore listened most attentively to all, and then said:

"This man Caspar is a remarkable personage, Montague; but just now his escape is swallowed up in matters of more moment, for war—open war—has broken out, and it is now the question as to putting down these rebels against the king."

"The admiral arrived last night, and with several general officers we will hold a meeting to-day to decide what is best to be done, so you will remain in port until further orders."

"Yes, commodore; but could I ask how it is I stand just now with the king's government, for I am anxious for a settlement."

"To be frank, sir, I am the only support of my parents and sister, and having lost my little sloop, as you know, it is a hard blow upon me."

"The pirate schooner, Shark, I captured, along with her valuable cargo, and also the booty from Caspar's retreat, and it was quite a sum in prize money."

"True, but, if you remember, I gave over to you, at your request, the schooner, as an equivalent for your share of the prize-money, although she was fitted out at Government expense."

"Yes, sir, but the booty from the retreat, and the reward for the capture of Caspar and his men, put the king again largely in my debt."

The commodore stepped to a table and glanced over some items in a book.

Then he said:

"As you asked it of me, Montague, I had your claims transferred to me for my collection."

"You have to your credit, now, due you from me, for the king, just eight hundred and fifty pounds."

"Thank you, sir."

"This you can have now, if you wish it."

"And what was the cost of the fitting out of the Shark, sir, including the battery and small-arms?"

"That, as it was done in a private shipyard, I had charged to myself, paying cash for it, as I had to do to get the craft, at once, ready for sea, for the shipbuilders neglected other work, and the king, you know, is slow pay."

"Here are the items I paid out, for repairing, refitting, getting new spars, canvas and furniture: three hundred and fifty pounds."

"Then the battery, sir, and arms?"

"Were just four hundred pounds more, making in all seven hundred and fifty pounds."

"Will you kindly give me an order, commodore, for the amount due me by the king?"

"Certainly, or you can have the money."

"As you please, sir."

An order was written out for the money, which was sent for, and turned over to Mark, who gave his receipt.

"Now, Montague, remain in port until you hear definitely from me, and drop in daily on me to see if there are any orders," said the commodore.

Mark bowed and took his departure.

Several hours after, Commodore Rutledge received a letter, by a special messenger, and a bank draft also was inclosed, drawn to his order for seven hundred and fifty pounds, and his eyes opened as he read the letter.

"For all that you have done for me, Commodore Rutledge," it said, "I thank you most heartily, as you have been my friend."

"Herein you will find a draft for seven hundred and fifty pounds, and accompanying my communication is my official resignation as a midshipman in his Majesty's navy."

"The money will pay you, according to your accounts rendered me this morning, for the battery, small-arms and fitting out of the schooner 'Shark.'"

"The vessel already belonged to me, as I took her in lieu of prize money."

"As she was fitted out and manned from a private yard, and the amount was paid in cash, the draft I now send liquidates that debt, and makes the vessel, as she is, my own personal property, wholly paid for."

"What papers, furniture, signals, etc., belonging to the king that were on board I have had boxed and sent to your address."

"I was honored, as an American, by an officer's rank in the king's service, and I have endeavored to do my duty as such; but, as an American, when my people take up arms against the king, to become a free nation, I can no longer remain in the Royal Navy, and so send my resignation, to take effect at once it reaches your hands."

"As I pay all dues against me, there is no claim against me, and no charge of unfair dealing can be laid at my door."

"Again thanking you, my dear sir, I remain with deep regard, your obedient servant,"

"MARK MONTAGUE,"

"Late Midshipman, Royal Navy."

The commodore read this letter over twice, glanced again at the draft, and then turned to the resignation.

It was a simple, manly document, resigning the berth of midshipman in the king's navy, for the reason that he was an American and would serve with his fellow-patriots, not against them.

"He is a noble, honorable fellow, and I am sorry to lose him," said the commodore, and the admiral just then coming in, accompanied by a general officer, he placed the letters and all before them.

The admiral was in ill-humor, and at once blurted out:

"He has no right to the vessel, or her arms! He is a traitor, like all the rest of these infernal rebels, and I will outlaw him! By the Lord Harry! but he shall never leave port! I will seize his vessel and hang him to the yard-arm! I will teach them rebels that they shall be dealt with as their treachery deserves!"

"But, admiral, the youth really owned the vessel, and he pays here for the battery and arms."

"We cannot, I fear, do otherwise than accept the resignation," urged the commodore.

"No, sir, I will not accept it, and I will at once send and have him brought before me, and he shall swing for his crimes before another sunset!"

"Call an officer, Commodore Rutledge, and send him with a guard at once for that traitor."

The commodore sighed, but he could do nothing else than obey.

So an officer was ordered to arrest Mark Montague and bring him at once before the irate admiral.

In an hour's time he returned and said excitedly:

"He has gone, sir!"

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Gone to sea, sir."

"In the schooner?"

"Yes, sir, you can see the schooner now, sir, just beyond the forts," and the officer pointed from the open window, where the pretty Shark was visible under a cloud of canvas, dashing swiftly along toward the sea.

"By Heaven!" cried the admiral, "I shall outlaw him for this! Draw up papers, sir, of outlawry against Mark Montague, late midshipman in the Royal Navy of Great Britain, and order that he be hanged to the yard-arm by any king's officer who may capture him at sea, or shot to death by any king's officer capturing him ashore, without trial and without mercy."

"There, sir, is it written?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"Then I will attach my signature, and then affix the seal."

"There, now that gay middy will soon come to the end of his crime," said the admiral grimly, but the good-hearted commodore felt grieved that Mark's gallant career should thus fall under a cloud, and the brand of outlaw be placed upon him.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ICE BROKEN.

THE messenger by whom Mark Montague had sent his resignation, and his letter, was a royal middy in reality, for he was English by birth.

He had been acting as first officer of the Shark, and was devoted to his young commander, as were also the other two midshipmen on the little schooner, and who were also English.

Mark had held an earnest conversation with his officers, told them frankly what he meant to do, and then had sent his communication by the senior middy.

The midshipman messenger was waiting in an adjoining room, and he heard the strong words of the admiral.

Instantly he decided to be true to his friend and commander.

He knew all the circumstances, of how Mark had taken the schooner in lieu of prize-money, had paid for all that it had cost to fit her out, and that what had belonged to the king on board, had been sent to the commodore, and was then in his possession.

His resignation the commodore had received, and, wholly guiltless as he was of wrong, the midshipman argued that Mark should not suffer; so he hastened away, upon hearing the admiral's strong words, and bolted into the cabin in a breathless state.

"Midshipman Montague, you must put to sea at once."

"And why?"

"The admiral is going to have you hanged."

"Indeed?"

"He will, and he is going to seize your vessel."

"Is this true?"

"True as Gospel."

"Did you give my letter into the hands of the commodore?"

"Yes, and he read it, got the draft, read your resignation, and knows all. I watched him through the open door."

"Then why arises trouble?"

"Well, the admiral came in, and the commodore handed the papers to him. Then there was a scene, and I just hurried off to tell you to go to sea."

"I shall take your advice, thank you, for the vessel and all on her belong to me, I have resigned, and, as an American, shall do as I deem best."

"You are right, and God bless you, Montague."

"Your traps are all packed?"

"Yes, and so are those of my brother officers. But, what of the men?"

"All are Americans excepting six, and they will go ashore with you."

Farewells were said, and the young officer and the men were landed on the wharf.

Then, when the boat returned, it was quickly swung up at the quarter davits, the anchor was already up, sail was set, and the Shark went flying away from danger.

Not until she was beyond peril did the harbor forts

have orders to stop her, and then it was seen, and remembered, that she had passed out without any colors flying.

Having hauled down the king's flag, Mark Montague would not protect himself under it, even though the forts had opened upon him.

Shaping his course south, Mark headed for New York, where he knew he could find those in authority, in the Colonial Government, and he had kept himself well-posted upon all that had been going on, for, though as a king's officer he would say nothing, still he had never dreamed of being other than a patriot when the time should come for him to act.

Of course, as soon as the news could get there, the tidings of Mark's having been outlawed, for being a traitor to the king, reached his home, and cheers were given by many for the bold act of the young middy.

He had bravely acted when the time came, and those who had condemned him, and sneered at him, as a king's officer, were now loudest in his praise.

Where he had gone no one knew, but Judge Stanwood at once mounted his horse, upon the reception of the news, and accompanied by Lola, rode down to the home of the Montagues.

Never before had the judge been there: but he had always been impressed with Captain Montague and his wife, and felt that they were no ordinary people, while he appreciated their wish to hold aloof from others.

Now, after all the stirring news, he felt that he could call, and he did so.

He was courteously received, for respecting the judge, and knowing his influence, Captain Montague hoped to be able to learn more than he had through the general rumors in the town.

"Well, captain, this is startling news we hear, sir," said the judge, when all were seated.

"Yes, sir, but I have been sure that war must come, the year past."

"Ah, yes, war was inevitable; but I referred more particularly to Midshipman Montague, your gallant son."

"I learned that he had resigned his rank in the king's navy, and put to sea in his vessel, for which he had been outlawed."

"Well, it is in part correct, but I received a letter from an old friend there, who is a particular admirer of Master Mark, and he writes me what is the truth, so I rode over to make it known to you."

"You are most kind, sir," said Mr. Montague.

"He says that Master Mark owned the schooner outright—"

"Yes, he took her in place of prize money."

"And also he says that with his resignation he sent a draft for the entire sum paid for the battery, small-arms and fitting out of the schooner, for he had quite a sum due him."

"The commodore, it seems, accepted the affair as it should be, but the admiral stormed, threatened to hang Master Mark as a traitor, and, learning of this, your son sent his English officers and men ashore, hoisted sail and went to sea, as he had a right to do, not even hoisting the British flag to go out under."

"Failing to catch him, the admiral outlawed him, with orders to the British officer to hang him without trial."

"But my idea is that he will never be caught to be hanged," and the judge laughed.

"And where did Mark go, sir, after leaving Boston?" asked Captain Montague.

"He headed South, and I guess he is looking for the proper Colonial authorities to give him cruising papers as a privateer."

"I do not doubt it, and am only sorry I cannot also go to sea on an armed deck," the captain said.

"Well, my wild boy has gone off, and I hope he will do well; but, if he were such a son as you have, I would readily build him a craft and arm her for him."

"As it is, I shall at once have a fine vessel built and armed, and if Master Mark finds the little schooner too small for him, I'll stake my craft against his captaincy of her, on shares as a privateer, and he'll enrich us both, I have no doubt."

Soon after the judge and Lola took their leave, but the ice once broken, and with the outlawed middy the tie between them, from that day the Montagues and Stanwoods were no longer as strangers to each other.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TWO PRIVATEERS.

It was several months after the flight from Boston Harbor that the Shark was cruising along on a northerly course, and some dozen leagues off the Long Island shore.

"Sail, ho!"

The cry came from the foretop, and soon after the vessel sighted was made out to be a brig.

On the course that the two vessels were then sailing, they would pass near each other, without a change of course, so no order was given to the helmsman of the schooner.

As they drew nearer it was observed that the stranger was larger than the schooner, and more, was an armed vessel.

For a long time Mark gazed at the brig, having ascended the rigging to get a good look through his glass, and then he said quietly:

"It is the Dare Devil, that is certain."

The schooner had been into port, since leaving Boston, several of her large guns had been exchanged for larger ones, and two pivots, one forward, the other aft, were formidable pieces.

Her crew had been added to until she had sixty

men, and thus Mark considered that he had a very strong little craft.

His success had still clung to him, and he had already captured several British merchant vessels and carried them into port.

"So he was not anxious to avoid a combat with the brig, though she was larger, had a heavier battery and more men."

He had told Captain Caspar he should hunt him down, and he had now an opportunity of keeping his word.

He at once began to prepare the schooner for action, his doing so surprising some of his new men, to think that he meant to fight so formidable a foe.

The brig came steadily on, neither changing her course, and both vessels looked very beautiful as they glided over the sea under a six-knot breeze.

In spite of the warlike preparations on the schooner, the brig had not yet beaten to quarters.

Suddenly, up to the peak of the Shark went the flag of the Americans.

Almost instantly the brig wore round, and up went the same flag.

Then to the fore went fluttering a white flag, just as Mark was about to give an order to pour a broadside upon the foe.

As she showed the flag of the struggling Republic, and also a white flag at the fore, the Dare-Devil lay to and quietly awaited the coming of the schooner.

Nearer and nearer the Shark drew, and, when getting within hailing distance, a boat was lowered from the Dare-Devil, and came rapidly toward the schooner.

Mark at once gave orders to lay the schooner to, and recognizing in the boat's stern his old enemy, Caspar, he retired to his cabin, bidding the officer of the deck to show the visitor there.

"Well, Captain Montague, we meet again, sir," said Caspar as he entered the cabin of the Shark.

"I am still a midshipman, sir, but no longer in the Royal Navy, as my flag showed you."

"I have received a commission as privateer from the American Government, and am now cruising against the British," said Mark coldly, and in explanation.

"And I, Midshipman Montague, am no longer a pirate, for I hold papers also from the American Government, as a privateer, and am cruising against the British."

"Here are my papers, sir, and I ask that we bury the feud between us, for I shall endeavor to so act as to retrieve my past lawless career."

"Will you let me tell you my story, Midshipman Montague, and perhaps then you will accept my hand in friendship?"

Mark bowed, and the privateersman continued:

"I am an American, from near Baltimore, and come of a noble English family."

"My name is Caspar De Lorme, and I was educated in the English Navy."

"My family were rich and had influence, and I thus obtained rank in the Royal Navy and left a happy home to enter it."

"I, however, was often jeered and insulted as an American, and on one occasion, being fretted beyond endurance, I turned to a brother officer, who was most insulting, and struck him."

"He arose, and with his drawn sword was rushing upon me, when I seized a pistol and fired."

"Just at that instant another officer entered the room, and my bullet entered his brain."

"Imagine my horror to discover that I had killed an innocent man, and one who was then seeking me."

"He was engaged to marry my only sister, and had just come from my home, bringing me letters and presents from all."

"I was so maddened at the thought, that I challenged the man who had been the direct cause of this officer's death, and fighting, I killed him."

"I was tried for murder and sentenced to be hanged."

"But I made my escape, as you know I have a way of doing, and went to sea before the mast."

"Our vessel was wrecked by a storm, and nearer dead than alive, I was cared for by an old skipper, who afterward I learned was a smuggler."

"When able to do so, I returned to my home and there learned that my dear old mother had died of a broken heart, and my sister, whose intended I had killed, had become crazed with grief and was the inmate of a mad-house."

"Again I became a wanderer, and drifted back to the old skipper who had been kind to me."

"He made me his first mate, and when he died several years after, I became captain, and thus drifted into piracy."

"Such is my story, sir, and you see I have suffered for no sin, other than that of having been an American."

"Your good sister it was who made me realize that I was a very wicked man, and I pledged her my word I would become a different one."

"I went to the American Government officers, told them I had an armed vessel, and asked for a privateer's papers."

"They were given to me under the name of Duncan De Lorme, which were the names of my mother and father."

"Not a man with me on the brig have I that knew me as Caspar the Corsair, for I purchased a craft for Hawley, my mate, and gave him my crew, while I shipped another, of total strangers."

"Such is my story, Midshipman Montague, and I make you my confidant."

"I shall win fame, or death, and to your sister and your parents only tell my story, but leave the rest of the world to believe me dead, for I am, as Caspar, a pirate."

"The brig I have the money to pay for, and wish

to give it now into your hands, to place in those of her owner, and you can say that Caspar the pirate is dead, for it is the truth."

"You will not refuse my hand and friendship now, will you, Midshipman Montague?"

In response Mark warmly grasped his hand, and an hour after the two privateers parted and sailed on their way to battle for the American cause against the tyranny of a king.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE EXILE'S CONFESSION.

WITH the fort on the Kennebec River, in possession of the British, there was no chance, of course, for the running in and out of American vessels.

But, when at last the British were forced to retreat, and American soldiers manned the fort, the coasting trade in a measure was resumed once more.

Discovering the fact that the river was now open to American vessels, though sighting a couple of English cruisers blockading the entrance to the Kennebec, Mark Montague decided to run the gantlet and visit his home.

He had not been there for nearly two years, and in that time he well knew his name had not been forgotten, as the Privateer Shark had done many deeds of daring, and was feared by the British all along the coast.

Many a prize had she sent in to her credit, until her young captain felt that he was becoming a rich man.

Funds had been sent home, from other ports, and Merchant Patterson had been paid for his brig, with the intimation that Caspar the pirate was dead.

The citizens of the town still kept up their interest in the outlawed middy, for rumors had come to them of his captures, and the several hard-fought battles he had had with small British cruisers and privateers, and on two occasions he had won victory against terrific odds.

As for Merton Stanwood and his two mates, it was rumored that they were serving somewhere on an American privateer, but no tales of their daring deeds were ever told at home, and they almost dropped out of the public mind, though the judge, the merchant and the old widow mourned for their sons, and hoped for the best in the end.

One night loud cannonading was heard at the mouth of the river, startling the people from their slumbers, and it was known that some battle was going on at sea.

Louder and louder grew the firing, nearer and nearer it resounded and at last ceased.

But when the townspeople opened their eyes the following morning, they were amazed to behold a trim little cruiser in port.

She looked the worse for hard sea service, and her hull and spars were terribly cut up by shot, while her sails were torn; but for all this there were many who recognized the famous craft, and shouts arose at once, mingled with cheers:

"The outlawed middy has returned home!"

"The Privateer Shark is in port!"

It was indeed the Shark, and her gallant commander had run her through the fire of the British blockading vessels and reached port.

Then he had at once landed in the early morning and started home on foot, along the highway, where two years before he had been seized by Stanwood and his two pals.

He walked slowly, drinking in the fresh morning air with a relish, and enjoying the beauties of the scene about him.

He expected to surprise the good people at home. But old Abram, an early riser, had seen the schooner go up to the town, and vowed that it was the Shark.

So he had aroused all in the house.

The firing had awakened all, too, and it seemed just like the middy to run the gantlet to see those he loved at home.

So, as he came at a swinging pace down the path, he was greeted with a cheer.

A moment after his sister had run to him and thrown her arms about his neck.

Then came his mother's embrace, a warm hand-grasp and "God bless you!" from his father, and a greeting from Abram, his wife, and Charcoal, for the latter had gotten left behind in the schooner's hasty flight to sea in chase of the Dare-Devil.

Could they believe that Mark was no longer a youth?

Tall, splendidly-formed, and thoroughly a man he looked.

So bronzed, and with his brown, curling hair and dark mustache, he was indeed a handsome fellow, and warranted Allene's remark:

"Oh, brother! all the girls will break their hearts about you."

Then he told of his cruise, and his triumphs, and how he had met Duncan De Lorme, as he called Caspar.

And he told of the latter's fame, which had won him a lieutenantcy in the regular navy, and command of a vessel-of-war, and Allene's face flushed with pleasure as she heard of it.

The Shark was at once sent to the shipyard for repairs, and Mark took the rest he needed after his arduous service.

One afternoon, as he was seated with his father upon the piazza, the latter said:

"Come with me, my son."

He took his crutches and led the way up the hill.

He halted by the grave in the pines, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

"My son, you have never asked me one word about the man who lies here, although you have heard strange rumors about your father."

"I wish now to make a confession to you."

"I am an Englishman, my father being a baronet and my mother a French countess.

"I was the younger of two sons, the other being my half-brother, for my father first married an English lady.

"I was made a soldier of, but from my boyhood up my whole life was made wretched by the persecutions of my half-brother.

"He also entered the army, and he hated me with right good will, though why I never knew, except that he was noted for his ugly face, and I was not ill-looking.

"He so lied about me that, would you believe it, he turned my own father and mother against me.

"I then decided to leave England, and sought service in America.

"I left in England one whom I loved with my whole heart.

"She was a noble lady, and she returned that love, and I promised to get a home in America, give up England forever, and return and make her my wife.

"I knew that her father would never give his consent, for he wished her to marry my rich half-brother, the baronet, and our love was a secret between us.

"I had been in America hardly a year when my half-brother came as colonel of a regiment.

"He joined our command just as we were starting upon a northward march.

"I greeted him in a friendly way, and received only insult.

"Soon I found out that my army friends were giving me up, and I was shunned upon all sides.

"At once I resigned my commission, for I was a major, and determined to return to the town and devote myself to some other career, preferring the life of a sailor.

"The day before I was to leave the army, we were encamped up at the town above here, and my brother took from his pocket a miniature and letter, and in a sneering way said that he had just received them from England, from his intended bride, Lady Ellen Hargrove.

"That name set me wild, for it was the one woman of my love.

"I sprung to my feet and seized the miniature.

"The letter I did not then get hold of.

"It was Lady Ellen's likeness, and he sneered forth:

"She jilted you, and is to marry me.

"She told me she was only amusing herself with you."

"You lie!"

"I shouted the words in his face, and he wheeled on his heel and walked away.

"Soon after I got a challenge from him, and wrought up to fury, I accepted it.

"We met here on this spot, and I disarmed him, and gave him his life, asking him to tell me that what he said was a lie.

"He laughed at me and demanded another meeting.

"I refused, but was forced into it, and he fell mortally hurt, while I was seriously wounded.

"Knowing that he was to die, his whole nature changed, and he sent those about him away, and begged me to forgive him for all.

"He told me that Lady Ellen had refused him, telling him she loved me, and sent by his hand the letter and miniature to me.

"He asked to be buried where he fell, and then clasping my hand in his, he died.

"I buried him there, my son, and now you know the history of that grave.

"I have told you, that you might know the truth, of why I have held aloof from my fellow-men.

"I went to England and told your mother all.

"She secretly married me and we fled hither, and here we have lived, and here you and your sister were born.

"Now, my son, the story of the Exile's life is known to you, for I have made my confession."

Mark was deeply moved by his father's confession, and grasping his hand warmly, said:

"Father, you have been made to suffer more than you deserved; but I will do all in my power to brighten your future years.

"We are no longer poor now, and we can go and dwell where we are not known, and happiness will come to us all yet."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE urging of Mark, and also of Allene, who had been told her father's strange story by her mother, prevailed upon their parents to consent to give up their home on the Kennebec.

They said nothing to any one about their going, with one exception, Lola Stanwood and one night the Shark set sail from the Kennebec, and the townspeople were surprised beyond measure to know that the Exile, his wife, daughter and the negroes had gone with the outlawed middy.

They guessed themselves sick, as to the cause, and then guessed over again as to where they had all gone.

But guessing did no good, for no one knew, unless it was Judge Stanwood and Lola.

But, avoiding combats, and without waiting for prizes, the little Shark held on her way southward, entered the Chesapeake, and upon the shores of that grand inland sea the Exile and his family found a home.

Leaving them there Mark Montague once more set sail, and such favor did he win that the British regarded him with the greatest dread, and many a cruiser sought to run down the daring outlawed

middy and carry out the order of the old admiral to "Hang him without trial or mercy."

Though known among the British as the outlawed middy, Mark Montague won distinction among Americans as the Patriot Sea Ranger, and his daring deeds forced him up the scale of promotion, until when the long and cruel war came to an end, he was commanding a fine sloop-of-war of the United States Navy, with the rank of captain.

Then it was that he remembered the remark of Lola Stanwood:

"When you get to be a captain, I'll marry you, if you ask me, Master Mark."

So to the Kennebec he sailed, and one day presented himself before the beautiful maiden, for Lola was just getting out of her teens, and he asked her to marry him.

She had not forgotten her promise, and never had loved any one else, so that she was made most happy by the offer of his heart and hand, and they were married.

As for Merton Stanwood, he went from bad to worse, and turning pirate during the war, was one day mortally wounded in an action with Mark's vessel.

Mark recognized the dying man, and yet never told the real secret about him, simply saying that he had been "killed in action."

What became of his two evil comrades no one ever knew, but it was supposed that they lost their lives during the war.

And there is one other of whom I must speak.

That one was Duncan De Lorme, once known as Caspar, the Corsair.

He cast the wicked past so thoroughly behind him that he became a captain for gallantry, and when the war ended resigned his commission and sought the home of the Montagues, on the Chesapeake, for he had often met Mark in their cruises.

There he found Allene still unmarried, and he told her of his love, and of his past, and asked her to become his wife, forgiving and forgetting all.

She answered him as he wished, for she had discovered that what she had deemed love for Merton Stanwood, had only been gratitude for his saving her life, and that, in spite of his being an outlaw, she had loved Caspar from the first, though abhorring his crimes.

And so he was forgiven, and Allene became the wife of the man who had been so persistently hunted down by her brother when he was known as the Royal Middy, and his foe as Caspar, the Corsair.

Thus falls the curtain upon the scenes of my romance of the History of One Hundred Years Ago.

THE END.

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